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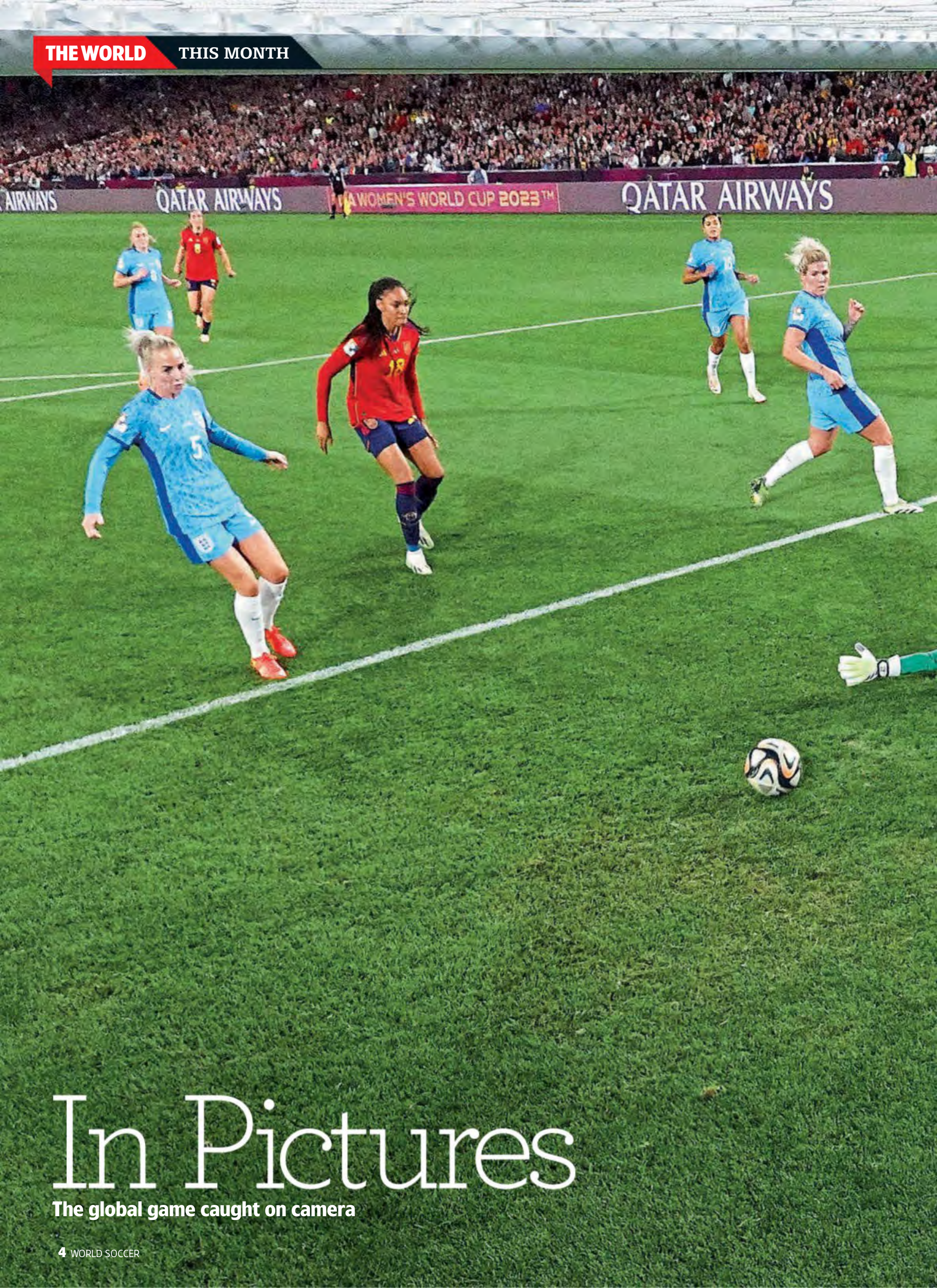
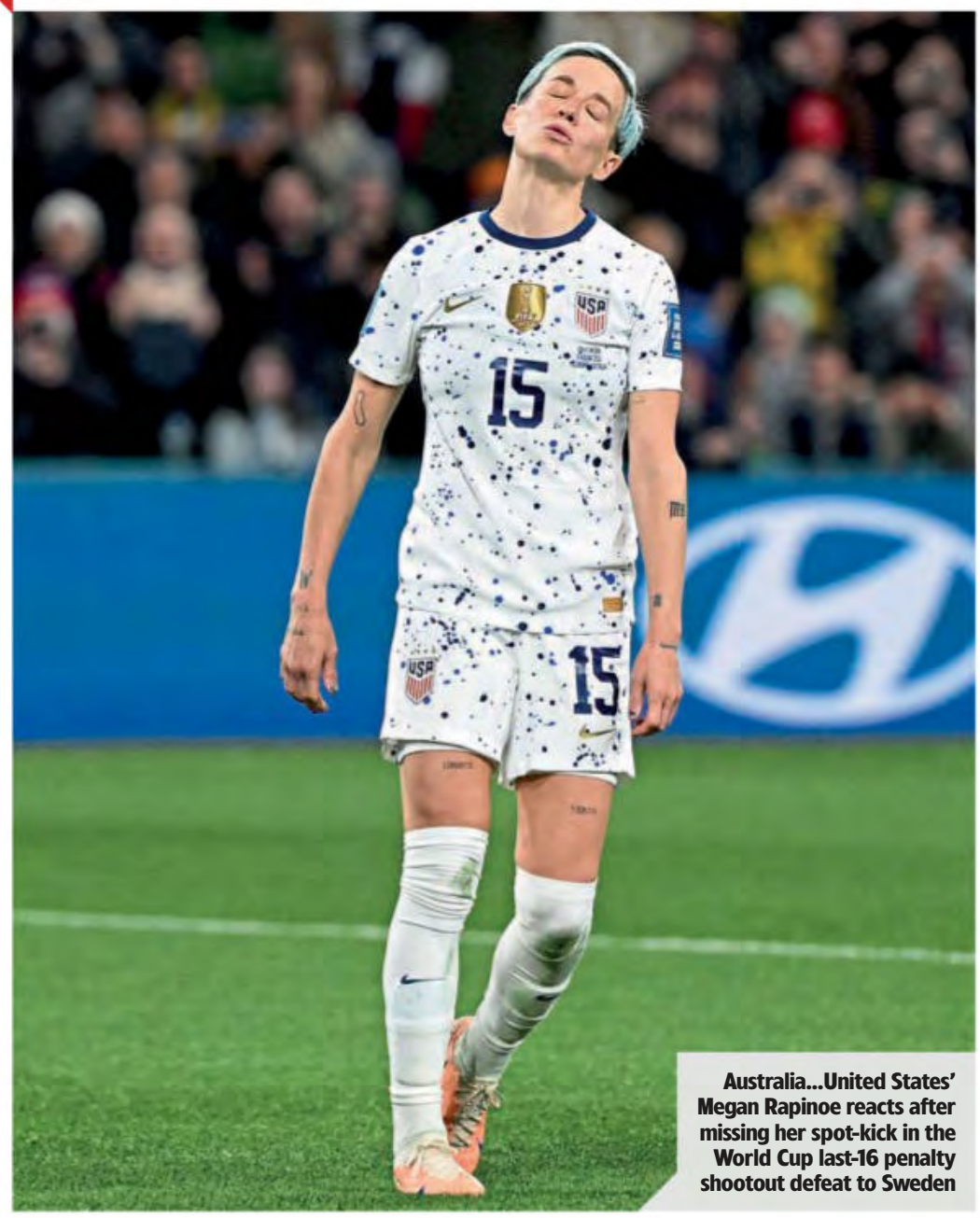


In Pictures

The global game caught on camera

Australia...Olga Carmona scores Spain's winner past England goalkeeper Mary Earps in the Women's World Cup final

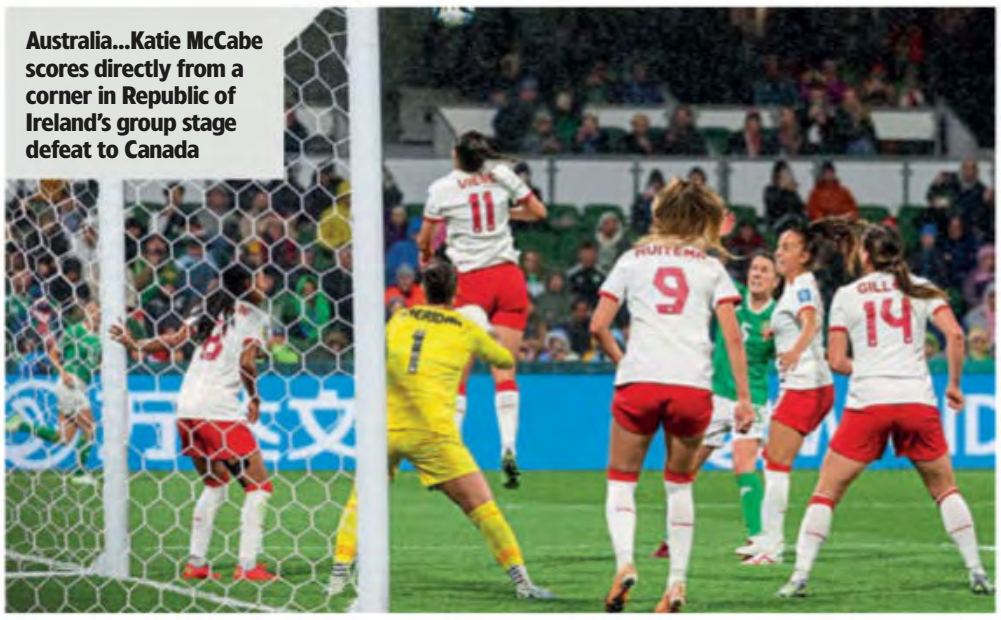


Australia...United States' Megan Rapinoe reacts after missing her spot-kick in the World Cup last-16 penalty shootout defeat to Sweden

Australia...the Matildas celebrate during their topsy-turvy penalty shootout win v France in the quarter-finals

New Zealand...Ali Riley, captain of New Zealand, can't hide her emotion after her country's first-ever World Cup win in the tournament opener

Australia...Nouhaila Benzina of Morocco makes history as the first player to wear a hijab at a World Cup



Australia...Katie McCabe scores directly from a corner in Republic of Ireland's group stage defeat to Canada

Australia...Jamaica celebrate after progressing to the World Cup knockout round for the first time after drawing with Brazil

Austria...Red Bull Salzburg versus Internazionale during a pre-season friendly on a rain-drenched pitch

Brazil...Vasco da Gama fans welcome new signing Dimitri Payet following his arrival from Marseille

Argentina...River Plate lift the Argentine league title amid a massive fireworks display and stunning backdrop at the Estadio Monumental (more on page 80)

Germany...Harry Kane comes on for his Bayern Munich debut in the German Super Cup after completing his transfer from Tottenham

England...Arsenal unveil a statue of legendary manager Arsene Wenger outside the Emirates Stadium

United States...Lionel Messi celebrates after scoring the winner on his Inter Miami debut (more on page 82)

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FROM THE EDITOR

The 2023 Women's World Cup was another record-making, barrier-breaking event, emphasising the accelerating growth of the women's game. Off the pitch the numbers were astounding – almost two million fans attended the tournament, while average attendances were up by more than 9,000 compared to France 2019.

On the pitch there were remarkable moments too, with South Korea's Casey Phair becoming the youngest-ever World Cup player (aged 16 years and 26 days), Morocco's Nouhaila Benzina becoming the first player to wear a hijab at the World Cup, and Spain's teenage sensation Salma Paralluelo becoming the first player to become a world champion at Under-17, Under-20 and senior level.

And that's not to mention any of the action, goals or drama from the tournament itself. Congratulations to Spain for their deserved victory, while England's Lionesses continue to be an inspiration, winning the hearts and minds of the country. Glenn Moore has the full story from Australia and New Zealand on page 54.

The key now for the women's game is to continue building on this momentum. The new UEFA Nations League is up next on the international front, while the domestic club campaigns kick-off shortly too – be sure to read our season preview in October's issue.

The Women's World Cup was another record-making, barrier-breaking event

The men's season, however, is already well underway, with the focus now switching to European competition, and this issue provides you with the ultimate guide to the 2023-24 UEFA Champions League campaign. Some may ask: why are there in-depth profiles of 38 teams? No, we haven't jumped the gun a season early. The new "Swiss-system" format and increase in teams from 32 to 36 will be from the 2024-25 campaign. Quite simply, this edition's print deadline fell before the play-offs concluded, so you've got a bonus six teams to read about.

Before you get stuck into that, though, a mention for Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo. Almost as if we're living in a footballing time warp, the two icons continue to make headlines and win trophy after trophy – even when no longer in the European spotlight.

Messi lit up the CONCACAF Leagues Cup following his move to Inter Miami, with his goalscoring exploits leading the club to its first-ever trophy and his 44th overall – more than any other player in history.

Ronaldo, meanwhile, picked up his first silverware in Saudi Arabia – the 2023 Arab Club Champions Cup. Next on his agenda will be the Saudi Pro League and Asian Champions League. His team, Al Nassr, only scrapped through to the latter – a 4-2 play-off win over Shabab Al Ahli with a late equaliser and two goals in stoppage-time cementing their place – but who would bet against him adding the Asian continental crown to the five European titles already in his trophy cabinet?

You can read reviews of both of their triumphs, along with a coach profile on Xabi Alonso, our tribute to retiring Italy legend Gianluigi Buffon, all the latest summer transfers and much more.

Stephen Fishlock, Group Editor

Debut goal... Harry Kane

GERMANY

England captain Kane shines on Bundesliga debut

Bayern Munich head coach Thomas Tuchel was full of praise for his new signing Harry Kane after the England striker scored on his Bundesliga debut. Kane joined the Bavarians for a club-record fee of €100 million from Tottenham Hotspur earlier this summer, and came on as a late substitute in the German Super Cup defeat to RB Leipzig. His first start came in the 4-0 win at Werder Bremen and, after he had set up the opener and notched one himself, Tuchel said: "He's so humble, he radiates joy in training and has so much quality to boot. It's so impressive. He will make every one of the players around him better...it was a very good debut."

Kane's move to Germany was followed two days later by Chelsea's swoop for Ecuador midfielder Moises Caicedo from Brighton, the biggest deal of the summer at £115m. The following day, Brazil's joint all-time record goalscorer Neymar became the latest big name to head to Saudi Arabia, leaving Paris Saint-Germain in a deal reported to be worth up to €90m plus add-ons.

More transfers opposite and on pages 18 & 44

Neymar...the latest megastar to move to Saudi Arabia

"All those involved, including Mason, recognise the difficulties with him recommencing his career at Manchester United. It has therefore been mutually agreed that it would be most appropriate for him to do so away from Old Trafford"

Manchester United announce Mason Greenwood's departure

UEFA

Europa Conference League: Juve out, Osasuna in

Juventus will not take part in any European competition this season after they were kicked out of the Europa Conference League by UEFA for breaching Financial Fair Play rules. The Italian side's Serie A points deduction for their involvement in the *Plusvalenza* scandal had already cost them a spot in the Champions League. Their Conference League place will be taken by last season's runners-up Fiorentina.

Elsewhere, Spanish side Osasuna will be able to take part in the competition after UEFA chose not to punish them for an almost ten-year-old match-fixing scandal. Several of the club's former directors were convicted for fixing games at the end of the 2013-14 La Liga season, and as a result UEFA recommended that the club be expelled from European competition following last season's seventh-place finish. However, that has now been overturned in light of "new evidence provided by the club in defence of its participation in the competition," according to a club statement.

"UEFA has concluded that Osasuna was a victim of the events that took place almost a decade ago," the statement added. "Consequently, UEFA considers Osasuna eligible to participate in the current edition of the European competition."

ITALY

San Siro not to be demolished

Milan and Inter's plans to knock down the San Siro and replace it with a newly-built stadium are now all but over after it was ruled that the ground cannot be demolished as it holds "cultural interest". Both clubs are now looking at alternative sites elsewhere in the city.

Of "cultural interest"...the San Siro

24 latest major transfers

The most recent big-money summer signings...

£115m
Moises CAICEDO
Brighton to Chelsea

£100m
Harry Kane
Tottenham to Bayern Munich

£77.6m
Neymar
Paris Saint-Germain to Al Hilal

£77m	Josko GVARDIOL	*RB Leipzig to Manchester City*
£72m	Rasmus HOJLUND	*Atalanta to Manchester United*
£55.4m	Jeremy DOKU	*Rennes to Manchester City*
£53m	Romeo LAVIA	*Southampton to Chelsea*
£51.9m	Moussa DIABY	*Bayer Leverkusen to Aston Villa*
£51m	OTAVIO	*Porto to Al Nassr*
£51m	MALCOM	*Zenit to Al Hilal*
£50m	Aleksandar MITROVIC	*Fulham to Al Hilal*
£43.5m	Ousmane DEMBELE	*Barcelona to Paris Saint-Germain*
£40m	FABINHO	*Liverpool to Al Ittihad*
£38.5m	Axel DISASI	*Monaco to Chelsea*
£38m	Harvey BARNES	*Leicester City to Newcastle United*
£34m	Micky VAN DE VEN	*Wolfsburg to Tottenham*
£32.8m	Edson ALVAREZ	*Ajax to West Ham United*
£32m	Tino LIVRAMENTO	*Southampton to Newcastle United*
£30m	Riyad MAHREZ	*Manchester City to Al Ahli*
£30m	James WARD-PROWSE	*Southampton to West Ham United*
£30m	Elye WAHI	*Montpelier to Lens*
£25.5m	Sadio MANE	*Bayern Munich to Al Nassr*
£25.5m	Roger IBANEZ	*Roma to Al Ahli*
£25.5m	Castello LUKEBA	*Lyon to RB Leipzig*

Keir RADNEDGE

THE INSIDER

The inevitability of change

European football's continuing evolution is as inevitable as it is necessary

UEFA president... Aleksander Ceferin

On November 13, 1963, Sporting of Lisbon demolished APOEL of Nicosia 16-1 in the European Cup Winners' Cup. Six of the goals fell to Domingos Antonio da Silva, their 26-year-old Angolan-born forward otherwise known as Mascarenhas. Records from that second round opener survive today.

The scoreline raised eyebrows around Europe and sparked angst over gaps in skills, standards and finance. Sounds familiar? So it should. The arguments, like the records set 60 years ago, still stand, albeit in a far different financial and media context.

A vain search for a bridge over the chasm will run and run. UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin has been musing about a salary cap while aware, as a lawyer, that such an imposition would offer only professional and financial delight for his professional colleagues.

UEFA's first attempt at an answer was the Financial Fair Play (FFP) system dreamed up by Ceferin's predecessor, Michel Platini, and enshrined in the rules and regulations by then-general secretary Gianni Infantino.

The original FFP had some effect, but both it and the refined new version merely seal the status quo in place to such an extent that even super-rich Newcastle's spending potential has been neutered by the expenditure/revenue ratio.

At base, the sticking point is the C-word: Change. Everyone wants it, no one likes it.

Turn the clock back to 1963 and Sporting's demolition of APOEL. This was only nine years after UEFA had been founded and was still mulling its identity and purpose: should it be an independent governing body, or merely a Euro-centric pressure group within FIFA? The power potential soon settled that debate in favour of as much autonomy as possible.

The argument over imbalance on and off the pitch would continue with regular demands from Europe's giants that the minnows should be hived off into their own competition at both club and national team levels.

Franz Beckenbauer, during his stay as Germany's representative on the FIFA exco, was among proponents of such a class division. UEFA ultimately came up with its own compromise in the sliding scale ranking controlling the Nations League. Another change for the good.

Pressure for change is nothing new. In the late 19th century, Preston North End chairman Major William Sudell caused a ruckus on building the first "Invincibles" by importing leading Scottish players and finding them jobs in his cotton mill. No doubt about it – professionalism was on the way despite all the resistance from the devotees of amateurism.

Decades later, the English football establishment was frightened by another change: the introduction of pan-European international competition. Chelsea were invited to compete in the inaugural European Champions Cup in 1955-56 only to be refused permission (they did not need) by the Football League and Alan Hardaker, its all-powerful general secretary.

Hardaker argued that if the clubs wanted more cash they should stay home and compete in his projected new League Cup. He was left looking like a football Luddite (and far worse by today's lights, of course) as Matt Busby and Manchester United lifted the European Cup in 1967-68.

Change is inevitable and turning back the clock impossible, as Platini discovered after swapping his No.10 shirt for a business suit and the role of UEFA president.

Platini walked in to Nyon as a football romantic. As a boy, he had been mesmerised by TV coverage of the FA Cup final. On coming to power, he wanted to scrap the Champions League mini-groups and revert to the two-leg knockout system. He acquiesced, reluctantly, after the financial facts of European football life had been explained to him.

In many ways, football has been well served by a conservative resistance to change.

Most resistant was the law-making International Board. Such caution served football well by comparison with other sports' shifting and shuffling. That was until a decade ago when Sepp Blatter's FIFA took over IFAB and introduced a gaggle of advisory panels with a propensity for fiddling with the Laws of the Game for the sake of it.

The Champions League has changed for the better: from restricted-entry knockout competition to the present 32-team group stage, with further expansion on its way next year. Do not knock it. It's not perfect, certainly, but it is a response to football's ever-increasing popularity. Never mind the rapacious ambitions of club chairmen and owners; they are a sub-plot in the grand evolutionary scheme.

> Change. Everyone wants it, no one likes it...Change is inevitable and turning back the clock impossible

An investigation by the financial analysis firm PitchBook noted that 35 per cent of clubs in Europe's "Big Five" leagues are funded, to a greater or lesser degree, by private finance vehicles. This is high-level club football today and perfect ammunition for all those commentators spooked by nation-state marketing, foreign ownership and sponsorship from mysterious gambling and bitcoin outfits.

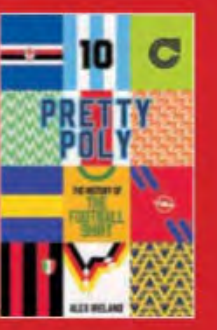
Perhaps they would prefer the old days when English clubs were owned by the local butchers, bakers and candlestick makers. And where did that lead the game? Down a dark and dismal road into scruffy, dirty stadia that turned out to be death traps.

Mascarenhas died, aged 78, after a long illness in Lisbon eight years ago. By then the competition in which he achieved history, the European Cup Winners' Cup, had been scrapped, yet now a third European club competition has been resurrected in the form of the Europa Conference League.

Similarly, if football is to maintain its all-conquering trajectory it must embrace both tradition and evolution.

Resistant to change...former Football League general secretary Alan Hardaker

BOOKS THIS MONTH



PRETTY POLY
By Alex Ireland
(Pitch Publishing, £25)

Pretty Poly tells the fascinating story of the football shirt, charting its dramatic evolution over a 150-year period, from modest beginnings to a product at the centre of a billion-dollar industry. Packed with facts, figures and anecdotes, it uncovers the history embedded in every feature of modern-day strips, including sponsors, names, numbers, patches and badges.

THE FORGOTTEN CUP
By Jo Araf
(Pitch Publishing, £19.99)

The Mitropa Cup was the inter-war equivalent of today's Champions League. Matthias Sindelar, Karel Pesek, Giuseppe Meazza, Gyorgy Sarosi and Josef Bican were the icons of a sport that had just turned professional, born out of the frictions of a politically heated era with an atmosphere that reverberated on the pitch. The top teams of the time have since fallen into oblivion, and the exploits of Europe's inter-war football stars are rarely remembered. *The Forgotten Cup* takes us back to that lost age.

Jonathan WILSON
TECHNICALLY SPEAKING

Ten Hag's United project enters phase two

The Dutch coach has no excuses in his second season at Old Trafford

Everybody knew the revolution at Manchester United would take time. There were understandable concerns after they began with a first-ever home defeat to Brighton and were then hammered 4-0 at Brentford, but once Erik ten Hag had retreated to a compromise position and form stabilised, last season became one of transition, of Ten Hag slowly imposing himself and his method. More will be expected this campaign.

There was even, improbably, a brief moment when it seemed that United might be a third force in the title race, but the concession of late goals at Crystal Palace and Arsenal in successive games in January, costing three points, had effectively put paid to that even before the shock of the 7-0 defeat at Liverpool. And that, really, was the story of the season: United were often quite good but never outstanding, and occasionally they were terrible.

Pressure on... Erik ten Hag

The former issue is perhaps easier to address than the latter. It's natural that when a new manager arrives and tries to instil a new style of play – and given how shambolic United had been, it's perhaps truer to say any style of play – there will be a period of adjustment. During that phase, the team will often look slightly ponderous, lacking the slickness brought by familiarity. And Ten Hag was hampered further by the fact he was dealing with such a hodgepodge of a squad, which included a number of players quite ill-suited to his style of football.

> Last season became one of transition, of Ten Hag slowly imposing himself and his method. More will be expected this campaign

Most obvious was David de Gea, a classic case of a very good player who simply doesn't suit the system. The Spaniard has been United's Player of the Year on four occasions and has regularly salvaged results with a string of saves, but he is not comfortable with the ball at his feet and a goalkeeper who can pass is essential to how Ten Hag wants to play – essential, arguably, to modern football. The defeat at Brentford, in part, could be attributed to his discomfort in playing the ball out from the back. In that sense the most important signing of a busy summer for United could be Andre Onana, a goalkeeper so committed to a passing game that when the Cameroon manager Rigobert Song demanded he be more direct it led to a row and his departure from the World Cup. Onana, of course, was part of Ten Hag's successful Ajax side; there is very little doubt that he is equipped for the sort of football United aspire to play.

One of Ten Hag's great successes last season was the way he manoeuvred Cristiano Ronaldo out of the squad, ridding himself of a player for whom the sort of selfless pressing his style demands is alien while somehow managing to make his exit appear Ronaldo's own fault. The problem was that without Ronaldo, and with Anthony Martial suffering frequent injuries, United were left with no regular centre-forward.

Key signings... Andre Onana and Mason Mount

When Martial played, United won 76 per cent of games; without him it was 62 per cent. The January loan of Netherlands striker Wout Weghorst was an acknowledgement of the problem but not a solution to it; United's Europa League exit against Sevilla having dominated most of the first leg was evidence of how deeply they needed a player who could convert chances. Whether Rasmus Hojlund is the answer is unclear – and £72m seems a lot to pay for a 20-year-old who is far from the finished article – but at least an obvious weakness is being addressed.

The other summer signing is perhaps the most contentious one, if only because Mason Mount is a player who so divides opinion. But what can be said is that every coach he has ever worked for speaks of his diligence and capacity to take tactical information on board, and that should allow him to become a key cog in midfield, linking between Casemiro and Bruno Fernandes as essentially a more dynamic version of Christian Eriksen. Mount's development seemed to plateau amid the chaos of Chelsea last season; it may be that the move is what he needed to kick on.

The biggest issue Ten Hag may face is that other problem, the tendency for United suddenly to collapse. The second half at Anfield was the most obvious example, but it also happened in the first half against both Brentford and Manchester City, and late on against Sevilla. The issue is tactical in as much as Ten Hag's football, even in the compromised form of last season, is high-risk, but those capitulations seemed mental, the result of a team freezing when the momentum of the game turned against them.

Perhaps the confidence brought by a more coherent style and by more consistent performances will alleviate that, but perhaps not. And that may be what defines whether Ten Hag is a success or not. The blocks have been assembled; this is the season to see what can be built with them.

ANGELO Gabriel

(Strasbourg)

It didn't take long for the partnership between Chelsea and Strasbourg to bear fruit. With the two clubs both now owned by Todd Boehly's BlueCo group, Angelo is likely to be the first of many players to be loaned from the Premier League club to France.

The 18-year-old was only signed by Chelsea this summer, arriving from Santos for a fee of almost £13 million. A regular for the Brazilian club since making his debut at 15, replacing Pele as the club's second-youngest player of all time, he notched seven assists in the league last season and has the potential to make a big impact under Patrick Vieira at Strasbourg.

Ben BRERETON DIAZ
(Villarreal)
The former Blackburn Rovers striker has certainly settled in quickly at his new club, judging from a video circulating of the Chile international singing "Sweet Caroline" to his new team-mates for his initiation.

Magne HOSETH
(KI)
In his first senior managerial role, the 42-year-old ex-Norway international made history by helping KI become the first Faroese club to reach the group stage of a UEFA competition.

Ibrahim SALAH
(Rennes)
The 21-year-old scored twice inside six minutes on his debut for Rennes after coming on as a late substitute in his side's 5-1 win over Metz on the first day of Ligue 1.

Oriol ROMEU
(Barcelona)
The midfielder was so determined to sign for the club whose academy he graduated from that he reportedly waived a €500,000 loyalty payment that was due to him.

"The question in this case is not about the 'almighty dollar', but a matter of principle"

Napoli president Aurelio De Laurentiis challenges the Italian Football Federation's appointment of Luciano Spalletti as national team coach after he'd left the Naples club for a "sabbatical"

IN PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

SUMMER 2023 LATEST MAJOR MOVES

Return to Italy... Gianluca Scamacca

Final game...Bono in the UEFA Super Cup

New Reds midfielder ...Wataru Endo

Saudi move... Allan Saint-Maximin

German switch... Marcel Sabitzer

£25m Robert Sanchez
Brighton to Chelsea
£23.1m Allan Saint-Maximin
Newcastle United to Al Ahli
£21.3m Gianluca Scamacca
West Ham United to Atalanta
£21.3m Lovro Majer
Rennes to Wolfsburg
£20m Tyler Adams
Leeds United to Bournemouth
£20m Alex Scott
Bristol City to Bournemouth
£20m Iliman Ndiaye
Sheffield United to Marseille
£19.3m Calvin Bassey
Ajax to Fulham
£19m Konstantinos Mavropanos
Stuttgart to West Ham United
£18m Yassine "Bono" Bounou
Sevilla to Al Hilal
£17.4m Victor Boniface
Union SG to Bayer Leverkusen
£17.4m Josip Sutalo
Dinamo Zagreb to Ajax
£17.3m Arthur Cabral
Fiorentina to Benfica
£17m Matheus Franca
Flamengo to Crystal Palace
£17m Yunus Musah
Valencia to Milan
£17m Denis Zakaria
Juventus to Monaco
£16.2m Marcel Sabitzer
Bayern Munich to Dortmund
£16.2m Wataru Endo
Stuttgart to Liverpool
£15.4m Merih Demiral
Atalanta to Al Ahli
£15.3m Habib Diallo
Strasbourg to Al Shabab
£15.3m Jeremie Boga
Atalanta to Nice
£15.3m Morten Hjulmand
Lecce to Sporting
£15m Anthony Elanga
Manchester Utd to Nott'm Forest
£14.7m Gustavo Hamer
Coventry City to Sheffield United
£14.5m Igor
Fiorentina to Brighton
£12.9m Robin Gosens
Internazionale to Union Berlin
£12.8m Cengiz Under
Marseille to Fenerbahce
£12.8m Taty Castellanos
New York City FC to Lazio
£12.8m Mohammed Salisu
Southampton to Monaco
£12.8m Abdou Diallo
PSG to Al Arabi
£12.5m Djordje Petrovic
New England Revolution to Chelsea
£12m Vinicius Souza
Lommel SK to Sheffield United
£12m Jordan Henderson
Liverpool to Al Ettifaq
£12m Aaron Ramsey
Aston Villa to Burnley
£11.9m Noah Okafor
Red Bull Salzburg to Milan
£11.8m Sander Berge
Sheffield United to Burnley
£11.3m Djibril Sow
Eintracht Frankfurt to Sevilla
£11.1m Arsen Zakharyan
Dynamo Moscow to Real Sociedad
£11.1m Ismaila Sarr
Watford to Marseille
£11.1m Emanuel Emegha
Sturm Graz to Strasbourg
£10.9m Nikola Vlasic
West Ham United to Torino
£10.6m Franck Kessie
Barcelona to Al Ahli
£10.5m Chuba Akpom
Middlesbrough to Ajax
£10.5m Attila Szalai
Fenerbahce to Hoffenheim
£10.4m Joseph Okumu
Gent to Reims
£10.2m Wilson Odobert
Troyes to Burnley
£10.2m M'Bala Nzola
Spezia to Fiorentina
£10.2m Gonzalo Plata
Real Valladolid to Al Sadd
£10.2m Gustav Isaksen
Midtjylland to Lazio
£10.2m Jerdy Schouten
Bologna to PSV
£10.2m Mohamed Daramy
Ajax to Reims
£10.2m Joakim Maehle
Atalanta to Wolfsburg
£10m Matt Turner
Arsenal to Nott'm Forest
£9.8m Hassan Al Tambakti
Al Shabab to Al Hilal
£8.6m Fred
Manchester Utd to Fenerbahce
£8.6m Mauro Icardi
PSG to Galatasaray
£8.5m Anatoliy Trubin
Shakhtar Donetsk to Benfica
£8.5m Alexander Sorloth
RB Leipzig to Villarreal
£8.5m Wilfried Songo
Torino to Monaco
£8.5m Natan
Red Bull Bragantino to Napoli
£7.2m Nico Gonzalez
Barcelona to Porto
£7m Max Aarons
Norwich City to Bournemouth
£7m Stephy Mavididi
Montpellier to Leicester City
£6.9m Diant Ramaj
Eintracht Frankfurt to Ajax
£6.9m Sergi Darder
Espanyol to Mallorca
£6.9m Sergio Arribas
Real Madrid to Almeria
£6.8m Dion Lopy
Reims to Almeria
£6.5m Cyle Larin
Real Valladolid to Mallorca
£6.5m Jack Hendry
Club Brugge to Al Ettifaq
£6m Walid Cheddira
Bari to Napoli
£6m Ibrahima Kone
Lorient to Almeria
£5.6m Kerem Demirbay
Bayer Leverkusen to Galatasaray
£5.2m Yann Sommer
Bayern Munich to Internazionale
£5.1m Calvin Stengs
Nice to Feyenoord
£5.1m Samu Omorodion
Granada to Atletico Madrid
£5m Raul Jimenez
Wolves to Fulham
£5m Auston Trusty
Arsenal to Sheffield United
£5m Ryan Giles
Wolves to Luton Town
£4.8m Rogerio
Sassuolo to Wolfsburg
£4.5m Aleksa Terzic
Fiorentina to Red Bull Salzburg
£4.3m Srdjan Babic
Almeria to Spartak Moscow
£4.3m Oliver Christensen
Hertha Berlin to Fiorentina
£4.3m Carl Starfelt
Celtic to Celta Vigo
£4.3m Marc Pubill
Levante to Almeria
£4.3m Akor Adams
Lillestrom to Montpellier
£4.3m Pablo Mari
Arsenal to Monza
£3.9m Fashion Sakala
Rangers to Al Fayha
£3.9m Alex Telles
Manchester Utd to Al Nassr
£3.4m Leandro Paredes
PSG to Roma
£3.4m Kevin Volland
Monaco to Union Berlin

LOANS

Alexander Nubel Bayern Munich to Stuttgart
Andrei Radu Internazionale to Bournemouth
Arnaut Danjuma Villarreal to Everton
Arthur Melo Juventus to Fiorentina
Bailey Peacock-Farrell Burnley to Aarhus
Bartosz Bereszynski Sampdoria to Empoli
Cesare Casadei Chelsea to Leicester City
Charles De Ketelaere Milan to Atalanta
Charlie Patino Arsenal to Swansea City
Christos Tzolis
Norwich City to Fortuna Dusseldorf
David Raya Brentford to Arsenal
Deniz Undav Brighton to Stuttgart
Duje Caleta-Car Southampton to Lyon
Eldor Shomurodov Roma to Cagliari
Emil Audero Sampdoria to Internazionale
Faride Alidou E. Frankfurt to Cologne
Flynn Downes
West Ham United to Southampton
Gabriel Slonina Chelsea to KAS Eupen
Garang Kuol Newcastle Utd to Volendam
Giuliano Simeone Atletico Madrid to Alaves

"I've had offers abroad and from some very good Championship teams. There's been some Saudi offers but it's not where I see myself playing, to be honest"

Theo Walcott reveals on *The Overlap* podcast that he turned down several offers before announcing his retirement

Goncalo Ramos Benfica to PSG
Gustavo Scarpa
Nott'm Forest to Olympiakos
Hakim Ziyech Chelsea to Galatasaray
Issa Kabore Manchester City to Luton Town
Jack Harrison Leeds United to Everton
Jacob Bruun Larsen Hoffenheim to Burnley
Jamal Lewis Newcastle United to Watford
Jeremy Sarmiento Brighton to West Brom
Jerome Onguene E. Frankfurt to Servette
Joe Rodon Tottenham to Leeds United
Josip Stanisic
Bayern Munich to Bayer Leverkusen
Junior Messias Milan to Genoa
Kepa Arrizabalaga Chelsea to Real Madrid
Konrad de la Fuente Marseille to Eibar
Leonidas Stergiou St Gallen to Stuttgart
Lewis Hall Chelsea to Newcastle United
Luca Pellegrini Juventus to Lazio
Lucas Pires Santos to Cadiz
Ludwig Augustinsson Sevilla to Anderlecht
Malik Tillman Bayern Munich to PSV
Marko Arnautovic Bologna to Inter
Marquinhos Arsenal to Nantes
Matias Vina Roma to Sassuolo
Matteo Cancellieri Lazio to Empoli
Matteo Gabbia Milan to Villarreal
Maximilian Philipp Wolfsburg to Freiburg
Maximilian Wober
Leeds United to B. Monchengladbach
Morgan Sanson Aston Villa to Nice
Morten Thorsby Union Berlin to Genoa
Nicolo Zaniolo Galatasaray to Aston Villa
Renato Sanches PSG to Roma
Richie Laryea
Nott'm Forest to Vancouver Whitecaps
Ruslan Malinovskyi Marseille to Genoa
Sergino Dest Barcelona to PSV
Soumaila Coulibaly Dortmund to Antwerp
Thomas Delaney Sevilla to Anderlecht
Unai Vencedor Athletic Club to Eibar
Walid Cheddira Napoli to Frosinone
Wout Weghorst Burnley to Hoffenheim

FREE TRANSFERS

Adama Traore Wolves to Fulham
Ainsley Maitland-Niles Arsenal to Lyon
Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain
Liverpool to Besiktas
Arnau Tenas Barcelona to PSG
Daniel Amartey Leicester City to Besiktas
Danilo D'Ambrosio Internazionale to Monza
Isco Free Agent to Real Betis
Jack Colback Nott'm Forest to QPR
Josh Maja Bordeaux to West Brom
Moussa Dembele Lyon to Al Ettifaq
Nathan Redmond Besiktas to Burnley
Ola Aina Torino to Nott'm Forest
Orjan Nyland RB Leipzig to Sevilla
Samuel Umtiti Barcelona to Lille
Santi Cazorla Al Sadd to Real Oviedo
Tete Shakhtar Donetsk to Galatasaray
Tom Davies Everton to Sheffield United
Yerry Mina Everton to Fiorentina

Turn to page 44 for more transfers

EUROPE

Italy appointed Napoli's *Scudetto*-winning boss **LUCIANO SPALLETTI** as their new coach following the resignation of Roberto Mancini.

Elsewhere, **MEHO KODRO** took charge of Bosnia & Herzegovina after Faruk Hadzibegic's brief tenure, while **THIERRY HENRY** took charge of France's Under-21 side.

Bayern Munich poached sporting director **CHRISTOPH FREUND** from Red Bull Salzburg, while Barcelona officially announced **DECO** as their new sporting director.

Wolverhampton Wanderers appointed ex-Bournemouth boss **GARY O'NEIL** as manager following the departure of Julen Lopetegui, while former Watford and Birmingham City striker **TROY DEENEY** joined Forest Green Rovers in a player-coach role.

DR Congo's **CEDRIC BAKAMBU** signed for Galatasaray just a few weeks after joining UAE side Al Nasr, while Sturm Graz captured defender **MAX JOHNSTON** from Motherwell.

ASIA

ANDRES INIESTA joined Emirates Club in the UAE after leaving Japanese side Vissel Kobe earlier this summer.

In Saudi Arabia, Al Fateh signed Armenia attacking midfielder **LUCAS ZELARYAN** from MLS side Columbus Crew, Damac captured Gambia forward **ASSAN CEESAY** from Lecce in Italy, while Nigeria striker **ODION IGHALO** swapped Al Hilal for Al Wehda.

CONCACAF

LigaMX side Monterrey signed Spain international midfielder **SERGIO CANALES** from Real Betis for £8.6m, while Tigres UANL made winger **DIEGO LAINEZ**'s loan move from Betis permanent for around £6m.

Change of coach ...Spalletti (L) will replace Mancini (R) as Italy boss

Boca unveiling... Edinson Cavani

In MLS, LA Galaxy signed striker **BILLY SHARP** on a short-term deal from Sheffield United, Nashville SC paid a reported £5m for **SAM SURRIDGE** from Nottingham Forest, and Charlotte FC signed Finland international full-back **JERE URONEN** from Brest.

SOUTH AMERICA

In Brazil, Sao Paulo signed free agent **JAMES RODRIGUEZ** and winger **LUCAS MOURA** from Tottenham, while Vasco da Gama snapped up **DIMITRI PAYET** after his exit from Marseille.

Argentinian giants Boca Juniors signed Uruguayan striker **EDINSON CAVANI**, and **MANUEL LANZINI** returned home to join River Plate from West Ham United. Racing Club signed Colombia playmaker **JUAN FERNANDO QUINTERO** from Junior.

Appointments, sackings and loans

EUROPE

Two World Cup winners retired in Spain's **DAVID SILVA** and Italy's **GIANLUIGI BUFFON** (more on page 48). Elsewhere, former Italy, Manchester United and Villarreal striker **GIUSEPPE ROSSI** also ended his playing career, as did former Uruguay and Atletico Madrid defensive stalwart **DIEGO GODIN**.

Former Southampton, Arsenal and England winger **THEO WALCOTT** hung up his boots, while ex-England and Wrexham goalkeeper **BEN FOSTER** also called time on his career.

Pass master... David Silva

AFRICA

Former Egypt boss **HOSSAM EL BADRY** resigned as head coach of Tunisian outfit CS Sfaxien.

CONCACAF

Mexico midfielder **LUIS CHAVEZ** left seven-time LigaMX champions Pachuca in the hopes of sealing a move to Europe.

"The loveliest of men, humble, humorous, always giving of his time and advice…they say never meet your heroes, well, I met mine and he was an absolute gentleman. Rest in peace, Ledge, one in a million"

Stan Collymore pays tribute to Trevor Francis

OBITUARIES

Trevor FRANCIS
(1954-2023)
Francis will, perhaps, forever be known as British football's first £1 million player.

It was a price tag that was well deserved. As a teenager, Francis was among the most talented young players that the country has ever seen. Dubbed "Superboy" by the Birmingham City fans, he was only 16 years old when he made his debut for the club in 1970, scoring 15 goals in his first season – including four in one match against Bolton Wanderers.

A remarkable return for one so young, he proved that it was no flash in the pan by scoring 12 goals the following season to help Birmingham win promotion to the top flight.

After passing the 20-goal milestone in both 1976-77 and 1977-78, Brian Clough and Nottingham Forest – by then the First Division champions – came calling.

Always determined to keep his new signings' feet on the ground, Clough welcomed Francis by sending him away to make him a cup of tea, and later insisted that the actual transfer fee was in fact £999,999. Whatever the precise fee, it was repaid at the end of his first season when Francis scored the winner against Malmo in the European Cup final.

That was as good as it got for Francis at Forest. He spent the summer of 1979 in the United States on loan at Detroit Express, before going on to lose in the 1980 League Cup final to Wolves after playing out of position on the right wing. Returning to centre-forward, he powered Forest to a second consecutive European Cup final, but agonisingly snapped his Achilles before the match took place.

He left Forest for Manchester City in 1981, then spent five seasons in Italy with Sampdoria and Atalanta, winning the 1985 Italian Cup with the former. A season in Scotland with Rangers followed before he joined QPR, where he became player-manager, and later performed a similar role at Sheffield Wednesday.

In 52 England appearances he scored 12 goals, including two at the 1982 World Cup in Spain.

Francis ended his playing career in 1994 with 725 pro appearances and 225 goals to his name. He reaffirmed his status as a Birmingham legend by returning to the club as manager between 1996 and 2001, losing the 2001 League Cup final to Liverpool on penalties. His last job in football was at Crystal Palace, which he departed in 2003. He spent his later years in Marbella, Spain.

Match winner… Francis with the European Cup

Bart-Williams…in action for Sheffield Wednesday in 1994

Jorge DOMINGUEZ
(1959-2023)
The Argentinian striker was a prolific goalscorer in France for the likes of Nice, Toulon, Nimes and Tours after making his name at Boca Juniors.

Benny ROONEY
(1943-2023)
Rooney came through Celtic's academy in the same generation as the club's famous European Cup-winning team, but never made an appearance for the Hoops. After going on to play over 200 league games for St Johnstone, Rooney became the manager of Morton, leading them to sixth place in the Scottish top flight despite them being part-time.

Chris BART-WILLIAMS
(1974-2023)
Less than two years after scoring for Leyton Orient in the Third Division at the age of 16 on his professional debut, Bart-Williams was playing Premier League football for Sheffield Wednesday. He enjoyed four seasons at Hillsborough, helping the team reach the finals of both the League Cup and FA Cup. Ironically, the manager that oversaw those cup runs was Trevor Francis, who died on the same day.

By the time he was 21, Bart-Williams had already played over 100 top-flight games and scored 16 goals, as well as winning 16 England U21 caps, to earn a £2.5m move to Nottingham Forest where he stayed for six-and-a-half seasons before moving on to Charlton Athletic in December 2001. A brief spell at Ipswich Town was followed by moves abroad, first to APOEL in Cyprus and then Maltese outfit Marsaxlokk.

After retiring from playing, he worked as a coach in the United States.

Adolf SCHERER
(1938-2023)
With 22 goals in 36 caps, Scherer was one of the highest scorers in the history of the Czechoslovakia national team. Three of those strikes came at the 1962 World Cup, as the team went all the way to the final before being beaten 3-1 by Brazil.

John CODDINGTON
(1937-2023)
Between 1955 and 1967, the centre-half played over 300 league games for Huddersfield Town, before spells at Blackburn Rovers, Stockport County and, finally, Drogheda United.

Ernesto MASTRANGELO
(1948-2023)
The striker is among the players to have represented both River Plate and Boca Juniors, but enjoyed most success at the latter. A key player in the team that won back-to-back Copas Libertadores in 1977 and 1978, he scored in the second final and was also on target in both legs as Boca defeated Borussia M'gladbach in the Intercontinental Cup in 1978.

Hassan AMCHARRAT
(1948-2023)
Only four players have scored more goals for Morocco than Amcharrat (18 in 39 games), who played in the team that won the 1976 Africa Cup of Nations.

Paul HINCE
(1945-2023)
As well as playing over 100 league games for Manchester City, Charlton Athletic, Bury, Crewe Alexandra and Macclesfield, Hince also worked as a journalist, going on to work as the chief sportswriter for the *Manchester Evening News*.

JACINTO
(1941-2023)
A seven-time Portuguese champion with Benfica, the defender was also part of the team that was torn apart by Pele's Santos in the 1962 Intercontinental Cup.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 2023-24 *PREVIEW*

ALL THE TEAMS, ALL THE TACTICS

TALKING POINTS & ANALYSIS

PROFILES ON KEY PLAYERS & COACHES

Turn over now for Nick Bidwell's comprehensive team guide

The favourites

BAYERN MUNICH

Overdue a Champions League challenge

For all Bayern Munich's noteworthy work in the Champions League last season – not dropping a single point in the group phase (scoring 18 and conceding just twice) and knocking out Paris Saint-Germain in the last 16 – what fans and decision-makers at the Allianz Arena demand above all is continental staying power, an ingredient that the Reds have singularly lacked in recent years.

Since winning the Champions League in 2020 (beating PSG 1-0 in the behind-closed-doors COVID final), Bayern have been knocked out at the quarter-final stage in each of the past three seasons and, for a club as prestigious and voraciously ambitious, this is simply not acceptable. Six-time winners of European football's top cup and runners-up on a further five occasions, Bayern set the bar higher than most. Whenever they fail to deliver in Europe, it cuts deep indeed, piling on the pressure to bounce back with a vengeance.

New rock at the back... Kim Min-jae

Within the Bayern boardroom, the conviction is that new coach Thomas Tuchel, in his first full season at the club, will prove successful in rekindling Bayern's European fire. Tuchel has the Champions League pedigree (winning the trophy with Chelsea in 2020-21), is a meticulous team-builder and tactician, and is more than equal to the task of recreating a new and improved work ethic.

COACH

Thomas Tuchel
Some would describe the 50-year-old as prickly, abrasive and combustible. Others as a pure genius in constant pursuit of perfection.

KEY MAN

Harry Kane
The club have finally, although a year too late, replaced Robert Lewandowski. Kane simply must deliver.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Jamal Musiala
Already an integral player at the age of 20. The favourite for this year's Golden Boy award.

Who will lead Bayern's back line?

Last season, Bayern conceded far too many goals through individual errors, so the arrival of the uncompromising South Korea centre-back Kim Min-jae, acquired for €50m from Napoli, should go a long way to stiffening their rearguard. "He does 20 unbelievable things per game," gushed former Napoli coach Luciano Spalletti.

Where must Bayern improve?

As both Tuchel and honorary president Uli Hoeness have pointed out, Bayern have fallen away of late in terms of their physicality, tenacity and ruthlessness. Duels are the bedrock of German football and Bayern have moved away somewhat from that aspect of the game.

What's the latest on Manuel Neuer?

Neuer has been working hard on his rehab after breaking his leg in a skiing accident, but there is still uncertainty on his return date after recently undergoing another round of surgery for the issue.

REAL MADRID

Determined to regain their European crown

They say the most dangerous animal is a wounded one, and this certainly applies to Real after they fell victim to Manchester City by such a wide margin in last season's semi-finals. The 4-0 defeat they suffered at the Etihad in the second leg was their second-heaviest loss in their history in the competition (the worst being a 5-0 thrashing against Milan back in 1989) and such a reverse should serve as a wake-up call. Unfortunately for *Los Blancos*, a record 14 European crowns does not mean immunity from the occasional thumping; the calamity in Manchester will have to be exorcised.

For the last five years or so, Real have successfully pivoted from the signing of *Galacticos* to collecting the best young prospects in the world and their new English midfielder Jude Bellingham, brought in this summer for an initial £85.5 million from Dortmund, is every inch such a hot-shot. Real have not splashed the cash to have him kicking his heels in the waiting room.

Hot-shot...Jude Bellingham will lead Real's Champions League pursuit

Real's defence came in for criticism after a disappointing pre-season tour of the United States. Should *Los Blancos* fans be concerned?

Real's back line was a leaky mess in America: lax positionally, panicky, uncoordinated and weak at set-pieces. The fact that Carlo Ancelotti was trying out a new 4-4-2 system may have been a factor. But what was unforgivable was the lack of concentration and poor attitude. ACL injuries for Eder Militao and Thibaut Courtois are significant setbacks.

COACH

Carlo Ancelotti
Don Carlo, four times a Champions League-winning manager, is the quietest, most reflective of leaders.

KEY MAN

Vinicius Jr
Generates chills of excitement whenever he gets on the ball. Begins the season with 59 goals and 64 assists in 225 matches for Real.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Arda Guler
Real's new Turkish attacker, picked up from Fenerbahce, has been compared to Messi and Maradona.

What position will Bellingham play?

In a 4-4-2, Bellingham is likely to be the furthest forward in a midfield diamond, while a 4-3-3 shape would see him used on the right or left of the midfield three. Ancelotti sees him as the leader of the orchestra, the number ten who makes the difference. It's worth noting that Bellingham was far better for Dortmund last season when breaking from deep.

With the prolific Karim Benzema gone, who will take up the slack?

Rodrygo should lead the line in a 4-3-3 or, more likely, be paired with Vinicius Jr in a 4-4-2. Ancelotti prefers the latter working his magic out wide on the left, but it may well be that Vini is even more menacing with another string to his bow. Playing through the middle could elevate his game to another plane altogether.

MANCHESTER CITY

Defending the title

Last season's Champions League top scorer...Erling Haaland

COACH

Pep Guardiola
Still as committed to excellence and victories as ever. Will be burning for at least one more Champions League title before he exits the club.

KEY MAN

Erling Haaland
A 12-goal haul in last season's Champions League could be an appetizer to an even bigger meal this time around.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Rico Lewis
A brilliant prospect with a wide skill-set, Lewis is outstanding as an inverted full-back who can drop into midfield.

After finally climbing to the top of the European mountain, winning their first Champions League crown last spring, City now face an even tougher challenge – defending the title and going on to create a dominant continental dynasty. City's Abu Dhabi owners did not splash the petro-dollars to make up the numbers and will feel they have their ducks in a row: last season's treble, the inimitable Pep Guardiola calling the first-team shots, record annual revenues for an English side and plans to extend the Etihad Stadium to more than 60,000.

No longer with the Champions League monkey on their back – which took 15 long years to jettison – City should now be in a great place psychologically. But there can be no room for complacency. Last season they had one of the smallest squads in the Premier League, with only 17 senior outfielders, and more bodies will be necessary to meet the demands of fighting on five fronts (Champions League, Club World Cup, Premier League, FA Cup and League Cup).

How much of a loss is the Bosman free exit of skipper Ilkay Gundogan?

Gundogan never stopped improving during his seven-year stint at the Etihad, catching the eye with his vision, technical prowess, elegance, energy and goals. City will not be the same without him. Mateo Kovacic, brought in from Chelsea, is not a like-for-like replacement, superb as a ball-carrier but not nearly as influential as Gundogan in the final third.

Will City be affected by the numerous summer backroom changes?

While Pep Guardiola runs the most professional of ships, he probably could have done without two of his most important coaching lieutenants opting to leave this summer, with Rodolfo Borrell heading to Austin FC in MLS and Enzo Maresca lured away by the offer to take charge of Leicester City in the English Championship. The return of Juanma Lillo, Pep's assistant between 2020 and 2022, at least provides a familiar face.

What does the future hold for mercurial talent Phil Foden?

This should be the season when Foden comes of age as a central midfielder. Early in his City career, Foden invariably appeared out on the wing, Guardiola reasoning that he was not quite mature enough for the complexities of a number eight berth. Foden performed ably after replacing Kevin De Bruyne in midfield during last season's final, and he will have to do the same while the Belgian recovers from a hamstring injury.

The Heavyweights

MANCHESTER UNITED

Back in the big time

Fifty-five years after George Best inspired the Red Devils to their first European Cup, United desperately need to act fast to restore some much-needed A-list credibility. Since Sir Alex Ferguson departed the Old Trafford scene in 2013 – leaving a legacy of two Champions League triumphs – this most prestigious of football addresses has lost its continental lustre. In the post-Fergie era, the furthest they have gone in the Champions League is a pair of quarter-final appearances. Where they once regarded the competition as their back-garden, it's now only a holiday home.

Since swapping Ajax for Old Trafford a year ago, Erik ten Hag has got most calls right. A club which had lost its way has now rediscovered high standards, and third place in the Premier League last season was a more than decent return – especially when the campaign featured home victories over rivals Liverpool and Manchester City. That said, much work remains to be done.

Key man ...Marcus Rashford

What is the number one asset of this current United side?

Probably on the defensive side, where outstanding Argentina centre-back Lisandro Martinez and Brazil holding midfielder Casemiro constitute a mean, ruthless rearguard barrier. With the South American pairing providing the ballast to the rear, United recorded 17 clean sheets in the Premier League last season, more than anyone else.

COACH

Erik ten Hag
Dutchmen invariably prefer home truths to sugar-coated rhetoric and Ten Hag's candour is just what United require.

KEY MAN

Marcus Rashford
The 30 goals he scored in all comps last term speak for themselves. When he fires, so do United.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Alejandro Garnacho
The 19-year-old Argentine made a number of sensational cameos last term. A dribbling wing king.

How important is the arrival of Denmark striker Rasmus Hojlund from Atalanta for £72m?

The evidence was there for all to see that United lacked an out-and-out striker last term. Cristiano Ronaldo no longer had the mobility, Wout Weghorst lacked the class, while Marcus Rashford is more at home on the left. Hojlund plainly has the potential, but United are gambling on the 20-year-old.

Is Andre Onana a solid replacement for David de Gea in goal?

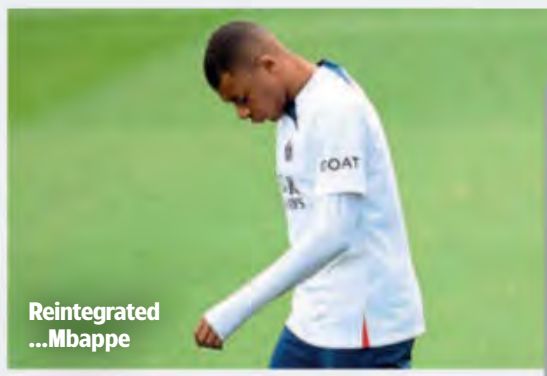
First of all it has to be said that de Gea, a United mainstay for over a decade, had become a liability. Onana has all the qualities to be a success at Old Trafford: shot-stopping and aerial ability, a commanding presence in the box and, most importantly, excellent in his distribution and calmness on the ball.

PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN

Mbappe dispute overshadows team building

There has only been one story doing the rounds at the Parc des Princes this summer – the state of open warfare pitting star man Kylian Mbappe against the club's paymasters. All turned toxic in June when Mbappe sent the board a bombshell letter, informing them that he would not be taking up the offer of an additional 12 months on his contract and that he would be leaving at the end of this season. PSG duly hit back, barring the France superstar from a pre-season tour of Japan and sending him to train with the B team. However, in August Mbappe was reinstated after what the club described as "very constructive and positive discussions".

Many French football pundits attribute Mbappe's power play to a gnawing feeling inside him that PSG are no longer major Champions League contenders, that their recruitment leaves much to be desired. However, with the arrivals of the creative South Korean attacking midfielder Lee Kang-in, Spanish winger Marco Asensio, France flyer Ousmane Dembele and Portugal striker Goncalo Ramos, they have certainly tried to make up for the departures of Lionel Messi and Neymar.



Reintegrated ...Mbappe

What should we expect from new boy winger Ousmane Dembele?

Dembele is undoubtedly a high calibre attacker, a wonderful dribbler, pacy and penetrative. Able to operate on either flank, he should have no problem at all fitting into Luis Enrique's favoured 4-3-3 formation. However, he can be somewhat inconsistent and is terribly injury-prone.

COACH

Luis Enrique
The ex-Spain boss knows exactly what it takes to win the Champions League, having done so with Barca in 2014-15.

KEY MAN

Kylian Mbappe
With his situation now resolved, it will be interesting to see Mbappe leading a new-look attack with Ramos and Dembele.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Warren Zaire-Emery
Homegrown teenage midfielder who is PSG's youngest-ever CL debutant.

Why should PSG fans be optimistic about new coach Luis Enrique?

First of all, he's quite a character, full of confidence and in-your-face intensity, infectiously competitive and always ready to speak his mind. Nothing but winning satisfies him and this full-on passion could well strike a chord with the hard-core PSG followers. He very much is an attacking coach, is tactically flexible and certainly will not be afraid to give youngsters a shot. If his plans come to fruition, his PSG will be spectacular.

Does it matter that he was not first choice to succeed Christophe Galtier?

It does, unfortunately. German coaches Julian Nagelmann and Thomas Tuchel were reportedly both ahead of him on the PSG shortlist and it's safe to say that a lot of the early new signings were not scouted or brought with Luis Enrique in mind. This could be an eventual source of friction, especially given Enrique's penchant for straight talking.

BARCELONA

A new era begins both on and off the pitch

New era...Gundogan was Barcelona's headline summer signing

COACH
Xavi
Four times a Champions League winner as Barca midfield general extraordinaire, he can lead and inspire from the technical area too.

KEY MAN
Robert Lewandowski
Still going strong at the age of 35, the predatory Poland striker with the chiselled physique represents Barca's trump card.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Lamine Yamal
This tremendously gifted 16-year-old winger, the son of a Moroccan father and mother from Equatorial Guinea, is already knocking on the first-team door.

The sound you can hear at the Camp Nou is the winds of change gusting. While their stadium undergoes major renovation, Barca will play their home games this season at the Montjuic Olympic Stadium and it's a new era on the personnel front too, with two of the team's most loyal servants, defensive midfielder Sergio Busquets and left-back Jordi Alba, moving to Inter Miami in MLS after 15 and 11 years respectively in the *Blaugrana* first team. Nor were Busquets and Alba the only big names to wave goodbye, joined in the departure lounge by PSG-bound France winger Ousmane Dembele.

Despite comfortably winning La Liga last term, these are very much precarious times for Barca. Financially they remain in dire straits, there is not sufficient cash for the showstopper stars they aspire to sign and, in each of the last two seasons, they have failed to qualify for the knockout stages of the Champions League. In his third season as coach, Xavi faces the sternest test of his credentials.

What are Xavi's best options to fill the gap left by Ousmane Dembele?

The most likely solution would be to hand this particular baton to Brazilian winger Raphinha. Last season, his first for Barca, the ex-Leeds United and Rennes star amassed ten goals and 12 assists, but was a little flaky in his performance levels. Other contenders for the right-flank brief include Ferran Torres – who has struggled to impress since arriving from Manchester City last year – and Ansu Fati, with Gavi and Pedri able to fill in on flank duty if Xavi opts for more security.

Is new midfielder Ilkay Gundogan a shoe-in to be an automatic starter?

For all Gundogan's excellence for Manchester City these past few years – Pep Guardiola never needed prompting to wax lyrical about him – he will have to work hard to carve out a niche for himself in the Barcelona engine room. In a midfield department that also features the talents of Frenkie de Jong, Pedri and Gavi, he will have to be on top form.

Who will succeed Sergio Busquets in the holding midfield role?

In a move that left the Barca faithful distinctly underwhelmed, the *Blaugrana* management initially intend to give the Busquets role to 31-year-old ex-Girona, Southampton and Chelsea enforcer Oriol Romeu, who began his career at Barca many moons ago. Long term, academy stand-out Pau Prim, still just 17, is earmarked for the slot.

The Heavyweights

ARSENAL

Young, hungry and on the up

Back in the Champions League for the first time in half-a-dozen years, the young and thrusting Gunners will be chomping at the bit to prove they truly belong at such a rarefied level of competition.

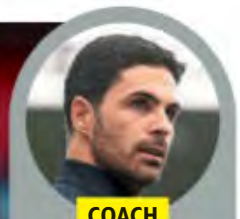
With an average age of around 25, the Arsenal class of 2023-24 have little Champions League experience to call on. Yet it need not be a debilitating factor. As they proved in finishing brilliant runners-up in an outstanding Premier League campaign last season, youthful freshness, insouciance and talent can take a team a long way. Expect the likes of Bukayo Saka, Martin Odegaard, Gabriel Jesus and Gabriel Martinelli to turn them into European contenders.

They will have to dig deep, though. During the Champions League group phase, they must also contend with a couple of Premier League blockbusters, hosting the North London derby against rivals Tottenham Hotspur and at home to reigning champions Manchester City. Just as well Arsenal have strengthened their squad, signing England's Declan Rice and Germany attacking-third operative Kai Havertz, though the loss of versatile Dutch defender Jurrien Timber – another victim to the ACL curse – is a cruel blow.

Fresh faces... Arsenal summer signings Rice, Havertz and Timber

Where will Kai Havertz be deployed?

The default plan is for the 24-year-old to take over Granit Xhaka's midfield role. This season's Community Shield victory, however, demonstrated his flexibility: the German was used as a kind of luxury target man, providing a more direct option to overcome Manchester City's press. Limited finishing means he will never be a world-class striker, but he does provide Arteta with tactical options.



COACH

Mikel Arteta
The Spaniard has transformed the club since taking over in 2019 and is building something really special at the Emirates.

KEY MAN

Bukayo Saka
When the goalscoring wide-man is on his game – which he normally is – he is almost unstoppable.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Gabriel Martinelli
The 22-year-old is just as explosive as Saka, but with more pace, tricks and a predatory instinct.

What will £105m new signing Declan Rice bring to his new club?

Bayern boss Thomas Tuchel recently said that Rice was the best defensive midfielder in Europe, and it's hard to disagree. Whether winning the ball, making interceptions or closing down passing lines, the former West Ham skipper is an enforcer of the highest calibre. Add in his brilliant leadership, excellent distribution and driving forays forward and he is the complete package.

If Arteta had one wish for the new campaign, what would it be?

That outstanding centre-back William Saliba stays fit. The Frenchman was key as Arsenal topped the Premier League for much of last season, but how they missed him when he was sidelined with a back injury for the run-in.

NAPOLI

Nursing a Scudetto hangover

The wild celebrations that greeted Napoli's Serie A title win a few months ago have, contrary to expectations, come to an end. Instead, the atmosphere has quickly turned to uncertainty and gloom. Luciano Spalletti, the coach who led them to their first Italian crown in 33 years last season, is now in charge of the national team. Cristiano Giuntoli, the director of sport who assembled their championship-winning squad, committed Neapolitan heresy by joining arch-rivals Juventus. As for the influential South Korean stopper Kim Min-jae, he surrendered to the Bayern Munich siren song. And the star count may diminish further. Piotr Zielinski has been linked with a transfer to Saudi Arabia and, in what would be the biggest blow of all, top scorer Victor Osimhen is reportedly stalling over a new contract, perhaps paving the way for a big-money move.

New head coach, the affable, media-friendly Frenchman Rudi Garcia, is at least making the right confident noises: "Our goal for this season must be to win the *Scudetto* and the Champions League."

Comedown... Napoli could struggle to hit the heights of last season

How will Napoli shape up tactically under new coach Rudi Garcia?

While Garcia has experimented with a 4-4-2 in pre-season, the likelihood is that he will stick to the 4-3-3 with which the Sky Blues enjoyed so much success last season. Under previous coach Spalletti, Napoli pressed high in the opposition half. Garcia probably will not be as aggressive, more interested in striking on the counter-attack.

COACH

Rudi Garcia
Thanks to a good spell at the helm of Roma (2013-16), the ex-Lille, Marseille and Lyon boss has a better reputation in Italy than his homeland.

KEY MAN

Khvicha Kvaratskhelia
Georgian god of dribbling, who claimed last season's Serie A Player of the Year award.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Giacomo Raspadori
The intelligent and versatile forward has now left Sassuolo for Naples permanently.

Who will take the role of defensive leader following Kim's departure?

Napoli prospected in Brazil for Kim's replacement, eventually settling on the 22-year-old Bragantino centre-back Natan for €10m. Bragantino are part of the Red Bull football network and Natan is a typical example of a defensive player from this brand: quick, physical and happy playing in a high defensive line.

Does Garcia's Champions League record inspire confidence?

Not especially. His Champions League record at the helm of Lille, Roma and Lyon is patchy, comprising just seven wins in 32 games, ten draws and 16 losses. In five campaigns, he was thrice eliminated at the group stage, though he did steer Lyon all the way to the semi-finals in 2019-20, beating RB Leipzig, Benfica, Juventus and Manchester City en route.

ATLETICO MADRID

Simeone's style receives a makeover

If all goes well this autumn, Atletico Madrid's long-serving head coach Diego Simeone will shortly become a European centurion, racking up his 100th game in the Champions League with the *Colchoneros*. You simply cannot buy the sort of experience Simeone has built up in this competition in his 12 years at the Atletico helm: ten Champions League campaigns prior to this season, three quarter-final appearances, a semi-final and two runners-up prizes (losing to rivals Real Madrid in both 2013-14 and 2015-16). *El Cholo* certainly knows how to get the job done in this most competitive of environments.

A team usually renowned for their strength of character and defensive meanness, Simeone's Atletico were remarkably easy on the eye in the second half of last season, so potent in attack that on eight occasions they managed to score at least three goals per game in La Liga. A total of 70 domestic league goals – a tally only bettered by Real Madrid – was their best return in six years. Could such numbers point to a more expressive Atletico in Europe this term?

Star man... Griezmann's strike partnership with Memphis Depay will be key

COACH

Diego Simeone
His side's failure to qualify for the CL knockout phase last season has led to intense scrutiny on the Argentine boss.

KEY MAN

Antoine Griezmann
Freewheeling French playmaker arguably in the form of his life. A 32-year-old with the enthusiasm of a teenager.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Pablo Barrios
The accomplished academy graduate has every chance of succeeding Koke as the midfield fulcrum.

Which main ingredient must be in the mix for Atletico to go deep in this season's competition?

Simeone believes that an attacking tandem of Antoine Griezmann and Memphis Depay could hold the key to a successful campaign. Potentially, they make a fearsome pair: Griezmann's all-terrain creativity and goals allied to Depay's firepower, slick combination play and ability to hold the ball up. One problem: since arriving from Barcelona in January, Depay has been injured a lot.

Should we expect a largely remodelled Atletico back line?

Change most definitely is afoot in this sector. Last season, the *Rojiblanco* rearguard was far less solid than usual and it's no coincidence that their first four signings of the summer were all defenders: full-back or centre-back Cesar Azpilicueta (former Chelsea), Turkey stopper Caglar Soyuncu (Leicester City), left-back Javi Galan (Celta Vigo) and Uruguayan centre-back Santiago Mourino (Racing Montevideo).

Is it true that Simeone has big plans for returning loanees Rodrigo Riquelme and Samuel Lino?

The two 23-year-olds certainly looked the part in pre-season. Lino, who impressed with Valencia last term, is an outstanding left-winger and could well take over from Yannick Carrasco in the Atleti first team. Riquelme, now back from an excellent stint at Girona, normally plays as a winger but has looked pretty good of late in a right-back slot.

INTERNAZIONALE

Last season's runners-up ready to go again

Everyone at Inter seems to have read the same memo this summer, insisting that the club's number one priority in 2023-24 is the conquest of a coveted Serie A title. However, no one should assume that the *Nerazzurri* will be only along for the Champions League ride. As they have comprehensively proved in recent times, they love nothing more than a cup competition, winning the Coppa Italia in each of the past two seasons and narrowly losing to Manchester City in Istanbul in last campaign's continental finale. They might have even beaten City if Belgium powerhouse Romelu Lukaku had not lost his shooting boots.

With their Chinese owners on an economy drive, the plan has been to build a more financially sustainable squad. A host of experienced stars – including Lukaku, Edin Dzeko, Andre Onana, Samir Handanovic, Marcelo Brozovic and Milan Skriniar – have all gone; an above-average procession of new boys includes Swiss keeper Yann Sommer (Bayern), *Azzurri* midfielder Davide Frattesi (Sassuolo), Colombian wide-man Juan Cuadrado (Juventus), French frontrunner Marcus Thuram (Monchengladbach) and Germany U21 captain Yann-Aurel Bisseck (Aarhus).

Going again...Internazionale have rebuilt for the 2023-24 season

COACH

Simone Inzaghi
In charge since 2021, the ex-Lazio striker recently signed a contract extension with Inter taking him through to 2025.

KEY MAN

Lautaro Martinez
Talismanic Argentine front-man who seems to markedly prefer club football to national team duty. Now skipper.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Carlos Augusto
Robin Gosens' replacement will challenge Federico Dimarco for the left wing-back berth.

What are the hallmarks of a Simone Inzaghi gameplan?

In his favoured 3-5-2 formation, Inzaghi's Inter is a good mix of the modern and the time-honoured. Emphasising a progressive possession game, while maintaining typical old-school Italian attributes: tactical discipline, meticulous organisation and a ruthless flair for punishing opposition mistakes.

Which player best exemplifies the current *Nerazzurri* side?

When Sardinian midfielder Nicolo Barella is firing on all cylinders, so are Inter. An indefatigable box-to-box operator with the happy knack of invariably being at the right place at the right time, the 26-year-old is the man who sets the emotional tone for Inter. A player of great application and intensity, with a flair for triggering danger in the final third.

Who is the most underrated figure in the Inter line-up?

While young ball-playing centre-back Alessandro Bastoni scoops most of the plaudits that come the way of the Inter back line, the merits of his rearguard associate Francesco Acerbi tend to be overlooked. Inter fans were not all keen when he arrived 12 months ago from Lazio (on an initial loan), but have grown to appreciate the veteran's leadership and gritty resistance.

The Dark Horses

NEWCASTLE UNITED

European nights return to Tyneside

Fans of the Geordie club have had to be patient when it comes to savouring magic moments in Europe. Only an infrequent continental competitor, Newcastle have made a European splash on just three previous occasions: winning the old Fairs Cup in 1968-69, reaching the quarter-finals of the UEFA Cup in 1996-97 and progressing to the second round group phase of the 2002-03 Champions League, a memorable campaign in which they managed to beat the likes of Juventus, Dynamo Kyiv, Feyenoord and Bayer Leverkusen. The Magpies have not played in the Champions League since, hence the heightened state of anticipation at St James' Park.

All credit to Newcastle manager Eddie Howe, who was appointed manager in November 2021 following a Saudi Arabia-backed takeover of the club. Transforming Premier League relegation candidates into a top-four side is quite a feat and, although he has been backed financially, it's been the result of intelligent, pragmatic spending rather than recklessly throwing wads of cash around.

Where will £55m man Sandro Tonali be used by Eddie Howe?

The Italian international is likely to be deployed in one of the number eight positions either side of Bruno Guimaraes. An excellent all-rounder, Tonali combines great defensive qualities – strength in the tackle and pronounced work ethic – with creativity. A playmaker with dynamism and intensity, he looks tailor-made for English football.

Do Newcastle have enough Champions League experience?

It's a 50-50 call. Manager Howe has never worked at this level before and most of the squad are completely new to the European elite. A sharp learning curve awaits them all. What is vital is that the players with Champions League know-how – Tonali, centre-back Sven Botman and full-back Kieran Trippier – be up to the mark as guiding lights.

Who is in pole position for the central striker role: Alexander Isak or Callum Wilson?

Wilson was the team's top scorer in the Premier League last season with 18 goals and there is no reason why his pace, cute movement and finishing power should not bear fruit in the Champions League. However Sweden's Isak, a club-record signing, has the better all-round game and offers more on the counter-attack, which is Newcastle's preferred modus operandi.

Summer signing... Sandro Tonali

COACH

Eddie Howe
Thoughtful former Bournemouth and Burnley manager who specialises in team-bonding and keeping the pressure off his charges.

KEY MAN

Bruno Guimaraes
The Magpies' multi-dimensional Brazilian box-to-box marvel, nominally a defensive midfielder but just as likely to take on playmaking duties further forward.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Elliot Anderson
Very impressive in pre-season for Howe's men, the versatile 20-year-old can cut a dash on the left, in midfield or as a forward.

BORUSSIA DORTMUND

Attempting to fill a Bellingham-shaped hole

The *Schwarz-Gelben* have high standards to maintain at the top European table. In their last ten Champions League campaigns, they have failed to reach the last 16 on only two occasions and have only missed out on group-phase qualification once since 2011-12. Champions in 1997 and runners-up in 2013, they are as much part of today's Champions League fabric as Manchester City, Barcelona and PSG.

The key issue is how well they react to the recent sale to Real Madrid of all-singing, all-dancing midfielder Jude Bellingham. The England international leaves a substantial hole in the Black-and-Yellow engine room and it remains to be seen whether the new midfield tandem of Felix Nmecha and Marcel Sabitzer, respectively acquired from Wolfsburg and Bayern Munich, will be good enough to fill it.

Always energised by the white-hot atmosphere of the Westfalenstadion on European nights, the Dortmunder would sign right now for the passcode for the knockout stages. A quarter-final berth or beyond would be an absolute bonus.

Bellingham replacement... Felix Nmecha

COACH
Edin Terzic
Living the dream of leading the club he adores. His team will never be short of fire in the belly but does he have sufficient strategic flair?

KEY MAN
Sebastien Haller
Missed the first half of last season with testicular cancer, but hit the ground running on his return and will likely prove even more decisive this term.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Karim Adeyemi
The 21-year-old can be inconsistent but has star quality.

In which position are Dortmund the most vulnerable?

Undoubtedly at right-back, where in recent times an under-par revolving door has operated. Marius Wolf, the current occupant of the berth, might be a hard-working and fiercely tenacious competitor, but going forward he lacks quality, barely registering in the assist stakes.

Who will captain the side now that Marco Reus has relinquished the armband?

Defensive midfielder Emre Can is the new skipper. The decision to appoint the 29-year-old ex-Bayer Leverkusen, Liverpool and Juventus man makes a great deal of sense. He was one of the driving forces in Dortmund's revival in the second half of last season, an excellent run that almost ended in Bundesliga glory.

Is there a conditioning problem at the club?

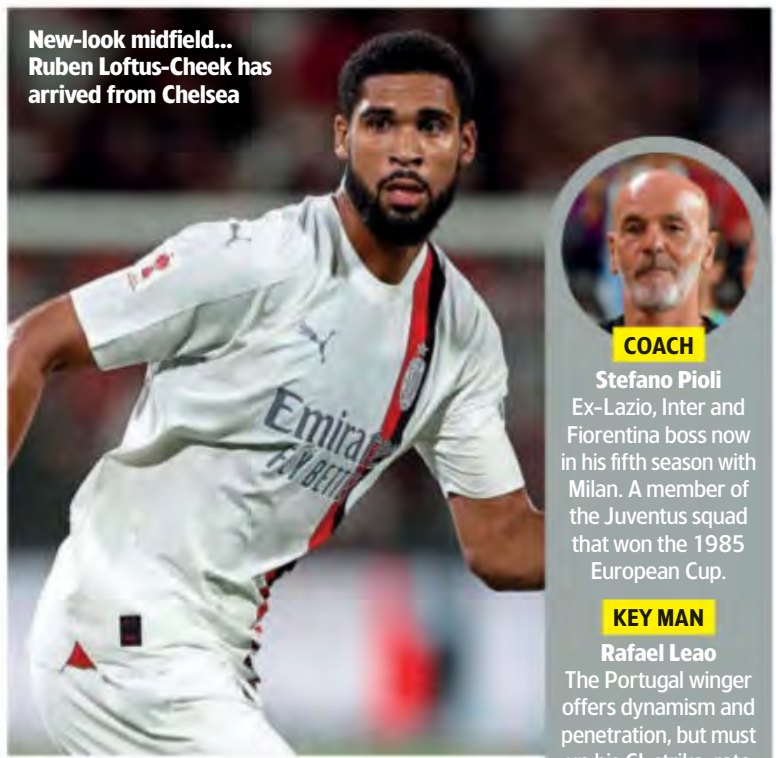
Over the years, Dortmund have been plagued with muscular injuries and it was the same story in pre-season, when no fewer than five players – including centre-back Nico Schlotterbeck, new midfielder Nmecha and keeper Gregor Kobel – fell victim to pulls and strains. At one point last season, BVB had up to five players sidelined at the same time with similar knocks.

MILAN

Fortunate to be here

It's worth noting that the *Rossoneri* would not have qualified for this season's Champions League if Juventus had not been docked ten points for suspect transfer activity. Allowed to creep in via the back door, Milan have responded to their good fortune by going on a summer spending spree, recruiting American attacker Christian Pulisic (Chelsea), Villarreal wide-man Samuel Chukwueze, another USA international in midfielder Yunus Musah (Valencia), England box-to-box man Ruben Loftus-Cheek (Chelsea) and promising Swiss striker Noah Okafor from Red Bull Salzburg. Few other Champions League sides have been as active as Milan in the summer window. But is it a case of quantity over quality? Only time will tell if their take on Moneyball works.

The off-season also featured a number of high-profile departures, with technical director Paolo Maldini and director of football Ricky Massara both fired and classy midfield all-rounder Sandro Tonali lured away by Newcastle in a £55m deal. That treasure trove financed over half of the summer acquisitions.



New-look midfield... Ruben Loftus-Cheek has arrived from Chelsea

COACH
Stefano Pioli
Ex-Lazio, Inter and Fiorentina boss now in his fifth season with Milan. A member of the Juventus squad that won the 1985 European Cup.

KEY MAN
Rafael Leao
The Portugal winger offers dynamism and penetration, but must up his CL strike-rate (two goals in 15 ties).

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Yunus Musah
The 20-year-old USA midfielder can occupy several different roles. Once on Arsenal's books.

What will be Milan's default shape this term?

Forced to rethink after the sale of Tonali and the current unavailability of defensive midfielder Ismael Bennacer – who is out with a knee injury – Pioli has decided to switch from his usual 4-2-3-1 to a 4-3-3. There should be quite a change in emphasis in the midfield area, where new boys Loftus-Cheek, Musah and Tijjani Reijnders (ex-AZ Alkmaar) are expected to add more physicality and raiding qualities.

How much longer can veteran striker Olivier Giroud stay competitive at this level?

Never write off the evergreen 36-year-old target man. They said he was running on fumes last season, yet he still did a great job of leading the line, amassing 18 goals in all competitions, including five in the Champions League. When he needs a breather Pioli can turn to new boy Okafor, or use Rafael Leao or Chukwueze through the middle.

In which area must Milan improve?

In the 12 months separating their 2021-22 Serie A title win and the end of last term – when they finished fourth – the *Rossoneri* very much let their defensive standards slip. Both individually and collectively, they looked alarmingly fallible at times. The likes of Pierre Kalulu and Fikayo Tomori must step it up.

The Dark Horses

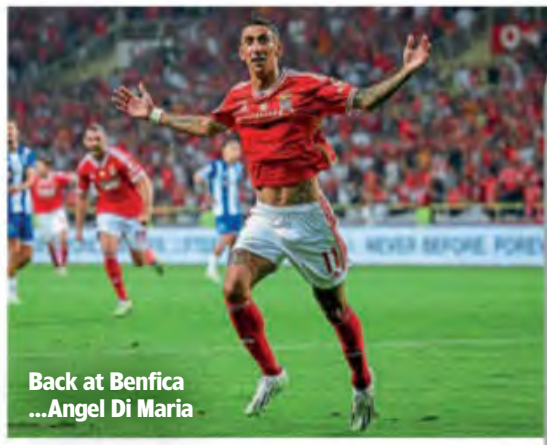
BENFICA

The exodus continues, but so does the success

Over the course of the last four years, the Eagles have rarely stopped offloading stars for big money, raking in over €400m by selling the likes of Joao Felix, Ruben Dias, Enzo Fernandez and Darwin Nunez. Most clubs would struggle to overcome the loss of such key performers but, rolling with the punches, Benfica seem to have become even stronger.

Head coach Roger Schmidt – who arrived last year from PSV – has sparked an exciting full-blooded renaissance. Electrified by the German's high-pressing tactics and exuberant attacking intent, Benfica only lost three games in winning the Portuguese league last term and also exceeded expectations in the Champions League, bowing out to Internazionale at the quarter-final stage.

The departure of their number one striker Goncalo Ramos, who has joined PSG on a single-season loan with a €65m option to buy, inevitably left Stadium of Light fans aggrieved. Benfica, however, feel they have a solid replacement in the ex-Fiorentina front-man Arthur Cabral.



Back at Benfica ...Angel Di Maria

Can new boy Cabral replace the goals of PSG-bound Ramos?

Cabral, a Brazilian striker who cost €20m, will have his work cut out to match Ramos' numbers. Cabral only scored eight Serie A goals for Fiorentina last season, though he did find the net seven times in the Europa Conference League. Some believe Italian football didn't suit him. A good start at Benfica could be the making of him.

COACH
Roger Schmidt
The ex-PSV and Leverkusen boss underlined his high-end credentials with CL victories last term v PSG and Juventus.

KEY MAN
Angel Di Maria
Thirteen years after his first spell with the club, the Peter Pan Argentine winger is back for one last career hurrah.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
David Jurasek
The 23-year-old Czech left-back has come in from Slavia Prague to replace Alex Grimaldo.

Will the Croat forward Petar Musa have more game-time this season?

Last season, his first in Benfica colours, the 25-year-old more than held his own, often looking sharp when coming off the bench and scoring 11 times in competitive action. Coach Schmidt certainly rates his work-rate and finishing, describing his contribution last term as "very important". Lots of physical presence, not so much mobility.

Can Norwegian utility man Fredrik Aursnes build on his top first season?

Pound for pound, Aursnes, 27, was arguably the team's most consistent player last season; hard-running, combative and intelligent in several midfield roles, at right-back and on the wing. A rare example of a player with fire in his belly who makes good decisions, and an excellent leader.

SEVILLA

Europa League specialists back with the elite

The Andalusians were up to their old tricks last spring, emerging victorious for an amazing seventh time in the Europa League, thus booking their ticket for a money-spinning Champions League jaunt. Without their European exploits last term, they would not have come close to the European top table. In a thoroughly mediocre domestic campaign, they only finished 12th in La Liga and, for a time, relegation had even looked on the cards. Coaches Julen Lopetegui and Jorge Sampaoli had no answers to the on-field chaos, and it was only when Jose Luis Mendilibar took over in late March that they looked a real team again.

The departure of their much-admired recruitment guru Monchi – who was lured to the Premier League by Aston Villa – cannot be described as anything but a huge setback. One of football's shrewdest operators, he is a master of discovering unknown gems, of buying low and selling high. It remains to be seen whether his successor, the ex-Leeds director of sport Victor Orta, will prove as inspired. Orta once worked under Monchi at Sevilla.

Sevilla legend ...Ivan Rakitic

What are the strengths of Mendilibar?

Primarily, the coach's emphasis is on the fundamentals. He makes a point of not over-complicating things, insisting on defensive solidity, sound organisation, the conquest of second balls, a plentiful supply of crosses from out wide and as many shots on target as possible. Put simply, he gets the best out of his players, keen that they play to their strengths and do not take unnecessary risks.

COACH
Jose Luis Mendilibar
Old-school boss, previously in charge of Eibar and Alaves, who dislikes VAR and statistical analysis.

KEY MAN
Ivan Rakitic
No foreigner has played more games for Sevilla than the stylish midfielder.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Juanlu
Homegrown 20-year-old who can operate both as a devastating right-winger or an attack-minded right-back.

Who could be Sevilla's surprise package in the months ahead?

Mendilibar is correct when he says that Mexico winger Jesus Corona (or "Tecatito", as he is commonly known) "possesses magic". Shame about a significant caveat: the diminutive Tecatito is somewhat injury-prone and sat out the bulk of last season after fracturing a fibula and suffering ankle ligament damage during a training session in August 2022.

Who is their most-improved player?

Last season was a fairy tale for 23-year-old French centre-back Loic Bade, who in the space of a few months went from Premier League transfer bust to Europa League winner. Sent on loan by Rennes to Nottingham Forest last summer, he did not appear once in the English top flight, but swiftly put that nightmare spell behind him on moving to Sevilla in January.

PORTO

Creaking at the back

You have to hand it to Porto boss Sergio Conceicao: despite a certain lack of top-class playing material, he always manages to assemble a team worth far more than the sum of its parts. Since taking over at the Estadio do Dragao in 2017, his side has rarely come up short in the Champions League, twice reaching the quarter-finals (in 2018-19 and 2020-21) and qualifying for the knockout stage on a further two occasions (2017-18 and last term). Not bad at all for a club which has had to live with the consequences of overstepping the mark on Financial Fair Play (FFP) regulations. Conceicao is a much more astute tactician than he is often given credit for and is a marvellous motivator too, an expert in the creation of an us-against-the-world mentality.

Among the new signings this summer are former Barcelona B midfielder Nico Gonzalez, Alan Varela from Boca Juniors and Spanish Under-20 centre-forward Fran Navarro – who piled up the league goals for Gil Vicente last season – while the most prominent outgoings see key player Otavio moving to Al Nassr for €60m and Colombia midfielder Mateus Uribe making tracks for Al Sadd in Qatar after four seasons with the Dragons.

Still going strong...Porto defender Pepe

Are Porto's first-choice central defenders over the hill?

Up until now, the Portuguese-Spanish unit made up of the 40-year-old Pepe and his sidekick Ivan Marcano, 36, has stood up surprisingly well to the test of their senior-service mettle. Indeed, Pepe has looked as good as new. But who knows when their legs will go. That moment could be imminent and with David Carmo struggling, there is no Plan B.

COACH
Sergio Conceicao
After doing so well with French side Nantes (2016-17), he was always likely to take over at Porto, where he starred as a fine winger in his playing days.

KEY MAN
Galeno
Skilful Brazil-born winger who hit 15 goals in all comps last campaign. Formerly of Braga.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Nico Gonzalez
Yet another talented Barcelona academy graduate. Was on loan at Valencia last term.

Which teams will Porto fear?

In 46 European competition games against English sides, Porto's record is poor, with just six wins and 26 defeats. One plus point for them is Liverpool's failure to make the Champions League cut this season: in recent times, the Merseysiders have thrashed Porto three times in the competition.

Which players are the most influential in this Porto outfit?

With midfield orchestrator Otavio now gone, new signing Alan Varela could become a key man. And what would they do without the fast and technically gifted Brazilian, Pepe Aquino, who has played in almost every position for the club except keeper and centre-back? "If I was the manager of Brazil, I'd pick Pepe as my right-back," says Conceicao.

RB LEIPZIG

A revolutionary summer

RB Leipzig coach Marco Rose has had to be a quick worker this summer, faced with an apparently never-ending procession of squad comings and goings. Not only has the 46-year-old lost the spine of the team that won the German Cup and finished third in the Bundesliga last term, with top scorer Christopher Nkunku, midfielders Konrad Laimer and Dominik Szoboszlai, and centre-back Josko Gvardiol leaving for Chelsea, Bayern, Liverpool and Manchester City respectively, he must also bed in a string of new signings, including attacking midfielders Xavi Simons (on loan from Paris Saint-Germain) and Christoph Baumgartner (Hoffenheim), strikers Benjamin Sesko (Red Bull Salzburg) and Lois Openda (Lens), and engine room battler Nicolas Seiwald (also Salzburg).

"We've been involved in 20 or so transfers in the off-season and that's not the sort of number we're used to," admitted RB Leipzig director of sport Max Eberl. "We've lost some absolute team leaders, but we've brought in several talented young players who we're confident will become key figures in their own right. Obviously we must give the team time to find itself." That's the problem; they don't really have the time.

Sensational signing...on-loan midfielder Xavi Simons

Who is likely to take the place of Josko Gvardiol in defence?

RB could well turn to towering French teenager El Chadaille Bitshiabu, who arrived from Paris Saint-Germain this summer in a €15m deal. Only 18, he made six starts for the Parisians last term. The other, more likely, contender is fellow Frenchman Castello Lukeba, who is equally young (just 20) and made a €30m switch from Lyon.

COACH
Marco Rose
He will not have pleasant memories of his last game in the CL – a 7-0 thumping at Manchester City last spring.

KEY MAN
Dani Olmo
The Spain star was recently rated the best attacking midfielder in the Bundesliga by *Kicker* magazine.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Fabio Carvalho
The versatile, quick and tricky Portuguese forward or attacking midfielder is on a season-long loan from Liverpool.

How does Openda compare to the striker he has replaced, Nkunku?

Although both are prolific goalscorers – Nkunku bagged 16 goals in the Bundesliga last term, while Openda mustered 21 in Ligue 1 for Lens – they are different types of player. Nkunku is more of a free spirit, dribbler and creator, good in tight spaces, while Openda relies much more on his robustness and pace, providing a real threat in behind when latching on to through balls.

In which department are RB currently the strongest?

They are spoilt for choice in attacking midfield, where they boast new boys Simons, Baumgartner and Liverpool loanee Fabio Carvalho, as well as the already established Dani Olmo and the Swedish schemer Emil Forsberg. The arrival of Simons, brought in on loan from PSG, is particularly exciting news: the 20-year-old Dutchman was simply sensational for PSV last season.

The Outsiders

FEYENOORD

Slot building something special

The most significant occurrence this summer at the Dutch champions was the decision of much-lauded coach Arne Slot to sign a new contract with the Rotterdammers to keep him on board until 2026. Slot had been linked with Tottenham Hotspur, only to wisely conclude that he still has unfinished business in the Dutch port city. There is a euphoria in Rotterdam at the moment that Slot just could not resist. Feyenoord's Eredivisie triumph last term was only their second this century and they have not competed in the Champions League for six long years. Why would Slot want to miss out on this?

Feyenoord, thrice European victors – claiming the European Cup in 1969-70, and the UEFA Cup in both 1973-74 and 2001-02 – have been displaying shoots of growth on the continental scene of late, reaching the last eight of the Europa League last season and losing to Roma in the 2021-22 Europa Conference League final. In their last Champions League campaign, they lost five out of six group fixtures. Any improvement would be most welcome.

Feared front line...Santiago Gimenez and Igor Paixao

Will Feyenoord's young squad (average age of 23.6 years) be a help or hindrance?

Most of the time, it constitutes a plus. They go about their task with an unrestrained youthful exuberance, and there's a fearlessness and bravery about them too. They have an indomitable spirit and proved it often enough in the Eredivisie last season, regularly coming from a goal down to rescue points.

COACH
Arne Slot
The 44-year-old knows how to make outsiders prosper, first turning AZ into Eredivisie contenders and then striking gold with Feyenoord.

KEY MAN
Santiago Gimenez
A revelation since signing last year, the Mexico striker scored 23 goals in all comps.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Lutsharel Geertruida
The 23-year-old can operate effectively in central defence, at right-back or as a holding midfielder.

Who will replace the suspended Santiago Gimenez in Feyenoord's first two European games?

Feyenoord will be relying on Japan striker Ayase Ueda, who arrives in Rotterdam with a solid reputation as a marksman. Last season, he netted no fewer than 22 goals in the Belgian top flight for Cercle Brugge. He says he can't wait to make his bow in the Champions League.

How much will they miss ex-skipper and star performer Orkun Kokcu after his summer move to Benfica?

Technically gifted and imaginative, Kokcu was the heartbeat of Feyenoord's engine room for five years. All in all, he played 175 games, scoring 32 goals and adding 27 assists. That said, he is replaceable; one of Feyenoord's best displays last season came when he was suspended for the 2-1 home victory over AZ.

REAL SOCIEDAD

A breath of fresh Basque air

In San Sebastian, they patently like the concept of steady progress, of incremental steps up the Spanish hierarchy. After the satisfaction of three top-six finishes in La Liga and as many Europa League campaigns, Sociedad managed to climb even higher last term, earning their first Champions League berth since 2013-14 thanks to fourth-place in the standings. Little wonder their coach Imanol Alguacil was so pleased: "What we've achieved is crazy, it's fantastic. It will be very difficult to improve on this, but we're an ambitious group and we're going to try."

Boasting a squad essentially made up of players who came through the club's academy, the men in blue-and-white stripes are a breath of fresh air. And true to conservative form, they have not gone overboard on the summer trading floor, limiting their reinforcements to on-loan Portuguese striker Andre Silva and Mali right-back Hamari Traore (ex-Rennes). They are bound to miss former Spain midfield great David Silva, who has hung up his boots at the grand old age of 37.

A player reborn... Takefusa Kubo

What makes Sociedad such a difficult team to counter?

The long-revered Basque football virtues of grit, commitment and solidarity. Thanks to the use of a narrow midfield diamond, they are rarely at a numerical disadvantage in this key area of the pitch and they press tigerishly. Turnovers are a speciality and they're one of the best sides at recycling regained possession into shots on goal.

COACH
Imanol Alguacil
Most of his career has taken place here, a long stint as a pro full-back followed by coaching assignments at every level.

KEY MAN
Mikel Oyarzabal
Classy Spain winger who missed nine months in 2022 with a torn ACL. Skilful and links up play.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Takefusa Kubo
After several loan spells away from Real Madrid, the bright and breezy Japan winger or second striker looks reborn.

Who will be the main striker this term?

After borrowing Norway striker Alexander Sorloth for the past two campaigns from RB Leipzig, *La Real* have again raided the German club, this time to land Portugal international Andre Silva on a 12-month loan, and he will lead the line. Silva has featured for a host of leading European sides (Porto, Milan, Sevilla and Eintracht Frankfurt) and has extensive Champions League experience. Umar Sadiq, who missed most of last season with an ACL tear, should serve as back-up.

Who are the key players at the back?

Goalkeeper Alex Remiro is absolutely peerless on the ball with a wonderful range of pass. Full of poise and chutzpah, he regularly beats the opposition press with a chipped ball to one of the full-backs or a midfield runner. Brittany-born Spanish national team central defender Robin Le Normand is quite the rearguard rock, practically unbeatable in the air and impressive in his powers of recovery.

LAZIO

Underachievers with a point to prove

The *Biancocelesti* squad picked up a collective bonus of €2m for qualifying for the forthcoming Champions League as Serie A runners-up, but now comes the far more important matter of international reputation. Only on three occasions have they reached the last 16 of the competition (in 1999-2000, 2000-01 and 2020-21) and more often than not they have failed to deliver the goods on this stage, lacking both killer instinct and belief. For a club of this stature, such continental missteps have to become a thing of the past. The fans, as well as club president Claudio Lotito, deserve much more.

Fresh from coming second in last season's Serie A race – their highest placing since winning the *Scudetto* in 1999-2000 – Lazio have good reason to feel confident. Despite the recent sale of key midfielder Sergej Milinkovic-Savic to Al Hilal in Saudi Arabia, the Sky Blues have two decent players for every position, a great coach in the canny Maurizio Sarri and plenty of goal threat courtesy of ever-hungry striker Ciro Immobile and excellent wingers Felipe Anderson and Mattia Zaccagni.

Milinkovic-Savic replacement... Daichi Kamada

COACH
Maurizio Sarri
Forget his unhappy spell in charge at Chelsea. In an Italian context, his highly organised system generally gets a fairer hearing.

KEY MAN
Alessio Romagnoli
This most elegant of central defenders is the foundation stone of the Lazio back line.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Gustav Isaksen
The talented Danish winger, acquired from Midtjylland, has been compared to Arjen Robben. Dribbling skills allied to industry.

Who is Taty Castellanos, Lazio's new striker?

Valentino "Taty'" Castellanos recently moved to Lazio from New York City FC in a deal worth a reported €15m. The 24-year-old Argentine striker is certainly well travelled, having previously worn the colours of the Universidad de Chile club, Torque in Uruguay and Spanish outfit Girona. He is superb at finding space in the box and can score every which way, proving particularly prolific in his last two seasons in MLS.

How will Sarri replace the influential Milinkovic-Savic in the heart of midfield?

Lazio plumped for a Japanese solution to this problem, snapping up Daichi Kamada from Eintracht Frankfurt on a Bosman free. The 27-year-old is a highly-versatile operator, as comfortable as an attacking midfielder as he is in a number six role. A brilliant technician, busy and very spatially-aware.

What about Lazio's other signings?

Other intriguing deals include the capture of youngsters Nicolo Rovella and Luca Pellegrini on loan from Juventus, while a new goalkeeper also seems high on the agenda with the likes of Tottenham's Hugo Lloris and Union Berlin's Frederik Ronnow linked with a move. Midfielder Rovella, a member of Italy's U21 squad at this summer's Euros, is highly rated, while Pellegrini offers depth at left-back.

RED BULL SALZBURG

Starting from scratch

Austrian champions for the past ten seasons, Salzburg have endured the most destabilising of summers, plunged into uncertainty following a mass flight of key personnel. The announcement that director of sport Christoph Freund – the man responsible for the club's visionary recruitment work – had agreed to join Bayern Munich was bad enough. Yet even worse was to follow when head coach Matthias Jaissle opted, on the eve of the new season, to say yes to a job offer from Al Ahli in Saudi Arabia. Certain sensationalist media reports had the former RB Leipzig and Bayern Munich boss Julian Nagelsmann in the frame to take over. But in the end reality proved too strong, with former New York Red Bulls coach Gerhard Struber appointed on a two-year contract.

Just to make matters worse, Salzburg also suffered an exodus of playing talent, the lengthy list of sales including midfielder Nicolas Seiwald and striker Benjamin Sesko - who both signed for RB Leipzig - and forward Noah Okafor, who moved to Milan.

New appointments... sporting director Bernhard Seonbuchner and head coach Gerhard Struber

COACH
Gerhard Struber
The 46-year-old has his chance after years in the academy and as an assistant, as well as spells at sister clubs Liefering and NY Red Bulls.

KEY MAN
Karim Konate
Hot prospect striker from the Ivory Coast. Only 19, he hit the goal that clinched the league title last term.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Strahinja Pavlovic
The uncompromising and physical centre-back has improved in every way since joining from Monaco.

How tough a job does new coach Gerhard Struber face on taking over from Matthias Jaissle?

Under Jaissle, Salzburg became the first-ever Austrian side to progress to the knockout stage of the Champions League (reaching the round of 16 in 2021-22). In his two years in charge, he gave them an extra dimension, making them more steely, disciplined and results-orientated. Jaissle will be an extremely tough act to follow.

Can Salzburg compete in Europe while selling their best players?

Up to now, Salzburg have proved remarkably successful in re-sowing their fields of talent every year. They have a brilliant scouting network and one of the best academies in Europe, offering ambitious youngsters a platform to impress and move on. But have they gone too far this summer by allowing eight first-teamers to leave?

What of the new faces?

The summer signings include Danish central midfielder Mads Bidstrup (former Brentford), Serbia Under-21 striker Peter Ratkov (FK TSC) and Germany Under-19 centre-back Leandro Morgalla (1860 Munich). Salzburg also have high hopes for recently-acquired Serbia left-back Aleksa Terzic, a 23-year-old purchase from Fiorentina. Goalkeeper Alexander Schlager (LASK) should start too.

The Outsiders

CELTIC

A familiar face in the managerial hotseat

The Bhoys have not reached the knockout stage of the Champions League since 2012-13, when they beat Spartak Moscow and Barcelona en route to a round-of-16 defeat to Juventus. Last season they showed little sign of ending that record despite some encouraging performances, most notably at home to Real Madrid.

That night, Ange Postecoglou became the first Australian coach to manage in the Champions League, and the all-important question now is to what extent Celtic will miss their former manager, who is now at Tottenham Hotspur. Postecoglou certainly was a huge success at Parkhead, lifting five of the six trophies available to him with an exciting brand of attacking football and showing a keen eye for transfer talent in untapped global markets. Celtic plumped for a familiar face when choosing their new manager, reappointing Brendan Rodgers, who won seven domestic trophies between 2016 and 2019.

Back at Celtic... Brendan Rodgers

Rodgers was not exactly man of the year at Parkhead when quitting the club for Leicester City midway through the 2018-19 season, with one banner at Parkhead dubbing him a "fraud". But the anger has, for the most part, subsided. Most supporters are realists and see the ex-Liverpool manager for what he is: a guy who knows all about Celtic and has a great track record.

COACH

Brendan Rodgers
In his previous stint as Celtic boss, he only managed one win in 12 CL group games.

KEY MAN

Kyogo Furuhashi
The Japan striker has proved a revelation since arriving from Vissel Kobe two years ago, piling up over 50 goals.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Mitchel Frame
Accomplished teenage left-back, who impressed last term with the Celtic U18s and B team. Has many admirers down south.

How to best describe Celtic's recruitment this summer?

In bringing in the likes of Polish centre-back Maik Nawrocki (Legia Warsaw), Norway U20 midfielder Odin Holm (Valerenga), South Korean winger Yang Hyun-jun (Gangwon FC) and Australian wide-man Marco Tilio (Melbourne City), Celtic have added depth and youthful promise to the squad. But surely they needed more, specifically in terms of wise-head experience and proven quality.

Have Celtic adequately replaced Portuguese winger Jota after his departure for Saudi outfit Al Ittihad?

The sale of the 24-year-old winger, who hit 15 goals for the Hoops last term, very much caught the Celtic faithful off guard. He was a huge fan favourite and such an integral part of the team's attacking play, a guarantee of double figures in strikes and assists. Would-be replacements Liel Abada, Sead Haksabanovic and James Forrest have a tough act to follow.

LENS

Recalibrating after high-profile departures

That Lens finished last season just one point behind perennial Ligue 1 victors Paris Saint-Germain speaks volumes for the excellent work of "*Sang et Or*" (Blood Red and Gold) coach Franck Haise and his indomitable, resourceful band of over-achieving players. Winning 11 of their last 12 matches was no mean feat and, as well as extracting every last drop of effectiveness from his side's high-octane counter-attacking game, Haise regularly had the guts to throw the opposition off the scent with an unexpected tactical gambit, such as shifting from a three-man defensive line to a four. What a shame that two of their most influential players – striker Lois Openda, now with RB Leipzig and midfielder Seko Fofana, who joined Saudi outfit Al Nassr – opted not to continue the adventure in northern France.

Openda's untimely departure brought in a club record fee that, in turn, has been reinvested on a record arrival

Record signing...Elye Wahi

– Elye Wahi for €30m from Montpellier. The 20-year-old rattled home 19 goals in Ligue 1 last season, and he will be joined by Guinea's Morgan Guilavogui, a tall attacking midfielder who scored 15 second-tier goals for Paris FC last term. Recalibrating a new-look attack will be an interesting test for coach Haise.

COACH

Franck Haise
In charge at the Stade Bollaert-Delelis since February 2020, he admitted early this year that Lens were "not built for the Champions League".

KEY MAN

Jonathan Gradit
Late developer who owes his nickname, "The Drill", to his ability to step out from the back and cut through the press.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Andy Diouf
The France U21 ace, signed from Basel, is a box-to-box merchant with a good left foot.

What is the principal ingredient in Lens' success?

Fundamental to the effectiveness of Haise's side is their back line, which is usually made up of Jonathan Gradit, Austrian international Kevin Danso and the Argentine Facundo Medina. The media spotlight may not always be trained on them, but what a job the trio do, wonderfully well drilled, radiating physicality and excellent on the ball. They are often as constructive as the team's midfield players.

Which player can Lens simply not do without?

Bought in from Clermont last year following the sale of Cheick Doucoure to Crystal Palace, Salis Abdul Samed does the work of three men in his defensive midfield slot. The Ghanaian is a search-and-destroy master, perpetual motion personified as he puts his heart and soul into tackles, blocks, clearances and tactical fouls.

RED STAR BELGRADE

Domestic giants, underdogs in Europe

European champions in 1991 and the last team from Eastern Europe to claim the continent's biggest club trophy, Red Star Belgrade enjoyed a vintage domestic campaign last season, remaining unbeaten in 37 league games (30 wins and seven draws). They were the only side to achieve such a feat in a European summer-spring league in 2022-23. So dominant were they that they wrapped up the title six weeks before the end of the season. Indeed, they were the first club to qualify for this edition of the Champions League.

Are Red Star up to the European task defensively?

Serbian champions...Red Star players celebrate last season's title

Two key components of their back line, goalkeeper Milan Borjan and promising young stopper Strahinja Erakovic, left in the summer for Slovan Bratislava and Zenit Saint Petersburg respectively. Much will depend on the experienced centre-back pairing of Aleksandar Dragovic and the Australian international Milos Degenek, who is back at the "Marakana" for a third spell.

COACH
Barak Bakhar
Red Star's new Israeli boss took Maccabi Haifa to group stage qualification in 2022.

KEY MAN
Osman Bukari
The Ghanaian fuses terrific dribbling with ice-cold composure when finishing.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Stefan Mitrovic
The tricky left-winger could have played for Canada but is now a Serbia international.

Which of their new signings could make the most impact?
Ivorian striker Jean-Philippe Krasso, picked up on a free transfer from French side Saint-Etienne, has been in sensational goalscoring form since arriving in the Serbian capital. The 26-year-old German-born frontman, who netted 17 goals in the Gallic second tier last season, had several offers from Ligue 1 clubs this summer, but finally opted for Champions League football with Red Star.

SHAKHTAR DONETSK

Battling against the odds

At a time of senseless bloodshed in Ukraine, the Pitmen of Shakhtar are not only a football club – they represent a little slice of normality, the hope, however slight at the moment, of a more peaceful tomorrow. Just like every other sector in Ukrainian society, the club is heavily involved in the war effort, making donations to humanitarian causes. Shakhtar will be hoping that positive performances in the Champions League will, in some small way, help boost the morale of the beleaguered nation. Shakhtar reached the last 16 of the Europa League last season.

Where will Shakhtar play their home games this season?

Unlikely success...Shakhtar celebrate beating RB Leipzig last season

After hosting European ties in Legia Warsaw's stadium last season, Shakhtar are said to be keen on setting up home in Germany in 2023-24. Dusseldorf and Gelsenkirchen have been mooted as possible venues, but a more likely stage is Hamburg's Volksparkstadion. The northern German city has not seen Champions League action for 17 years.

COACH
Patrick van Leeuwen
Dutch manager with exerience of working in Israel and Kazakhstan.

KEY MAN
Artem Bondarenko
Playmaker at the heart of Shakhtar's league triumph.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Stav Lemkin
Israeli who should replace Valeriy Bondar in central defence.

How badly have Shakhtar been affected by FIFA's decision to allow foreign players to unilaterally suspend their contracts?
No question that the edict has left Shakhtar with a cash and personnel deficit. Virtually all their top overseas players, including their huge stable of Brazilian aces, have departed the scene – with no transfer fees to cushion the blow. The last of their leading imports, wingers Manor Solomon and Tete, quit this summer for Tottenham and Galatasaray respectively.

UNION BERLIN

A change of home

Traditionalists – which Union Berlin supporters most certainly are – were far from delighted on discovering that they will not be hosting their first-ever Champions League odyssey at their home ground, the Stadion An der Alten Forsterei. Despite only boasting 3,500 seats, the 22,000-capacity Forsterei still meets UEFA stadium requirements. But in something of a surprise decision, the Union board have chosen to use Berlin's Olympiastadion as the backdrop to their brave new world, arguing that a more spacious venue will allow as many fans as possible to attend.

Who appears to be Union's shrewdest summer signing?

Neighbours' home...Union players celebrate winning at the Olympiastadion

Attacking midfielder Brenden Aaronson, brought in on loan from Leeds United, has much more about him than his meagre offerings in the Premier League last term suggest. He used to figure prominently in the Austrian league with Salzburg and should feel perfectly at home in Germany. Forward David Datro Fofana (Chelsea) and midfielder Lucas Tousart (Hertha Berlin) may also catch the eye.

COACH
Urs Fischer
Germany's Coach of the Year for 2022-23 after their miraculous fourth-place finish.

KEY MAN
Robin Knoche
Durable centre-back who commands Union's defence.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
David Datro Fofana
On loan from Chelsea, the Ivorian has been sharp in pre-season.

What about the club's new record signing Robin Gosens?
After failing to hit the same heights at Inter as he achieved at his previous club Atalanta, Gosens now gets the chance to reset. One of Union's biggest strengths last term was their swift counter-attacks down the flanks, so the left wing-back should enhance this further. Interestingly, the Germany international has never played in the Bundesliga before – his European experience in Italy and the Netherlands could prove invaluable.

Play-Off Contenders

ANTWERP

Still celebrating last season's title

Last season was one to remember for the Reds, clinching their first Belgian league title in 66 years. It was a close run thing, though, with Antwerp only securing the crown at the death on the final weekend of the season. Without that stoppage-time equaliser from Toby Alderweireld in a 2-2 draw with Genk, Antwerp would not have prevailed.

Belgian Super Cup winners... Toby Alderweireld

How key was the retaining of midfielder Mandela Keita?
After moving to Antwerp on loan from OH Leuven early this year, the Belgian U21 defensive midfielder gave a string of storming performances during the run-in. Leuven rate the 21-year-old in the €10m bracket, which is a reasonable valuation for someone of his promise.

COACH
Mark van Bommel
Ex-midfielder at PSV, Barca, Bayern, Milan and the Netherlands.

KEY MAN
Jean Butez
Compiled 20 clean sheets in the league last season.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Arthur Vermeeren
The 18-year-old midfielder plays with a maturity beyond his age.

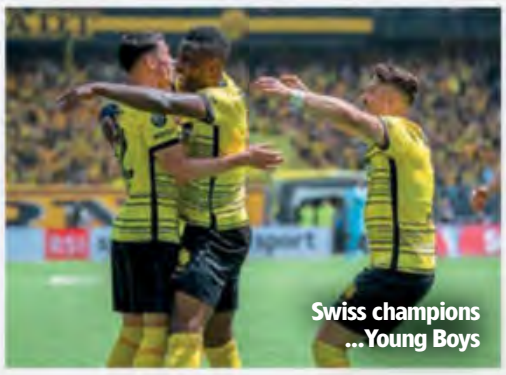
Who will replace outgoing centre-back Willian Pacho?
Antwerp appear to have pulled off a coup in signing Dortmund's 19-year-old stopper Soumaila Coulibaly on loan. The French U20 international saw a move to Burnley collapse earlier this summer.

Do they have sufficient firepower?
Dutch striker Vincent Janssen was the club's top scorer last term with 21 goals in all competitions. But does the former Tottenham man have enough class to make hay in the Champions League? At the highest level he lacks physicality.

YOUNG BOYS

Eyeing a birthday party

The Yellow-and-Blacks from Bern have been the pick of the Swiss crop for some time now, winning five of the past six championships. Their coach, Raphael Wicky, attributes much of their success to the "hunger" of his squad, and what better way to mark their 125th anniversary than to spring a surprise or two in the Champions League?



Swiss champions ...Young Boys

Are prolific strikers Jean-Pierre Nsame and Cedric Itten automatic starters?
Between them, the pair netted 40 league goals in 2022-23, but coach Wicky is often loathe to deploy both simultaneously, reasoning that it is better to pair one of them with a more mobile type. This opens the door for Meschak Elia or new signing Silvere Ganvoula.

COACH
Raphael Wicky
Former Switzerland midfielder has built a hard-working side.

KEY MAN
Jean-Pierre Nsame
Top of the Swiss scoring charts for the third time last term.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Fabian Rieder
Homegrown midfielder scored at Old Trafford in 2021-22.

How badly will YB miss Cedric Zesiger after his move to Wolfsburg?
Zesiger, 24, is a fine prospect and will be a hard act to follow. That said, YB are not short of options at centre-back: the up-and-coming Aurele Amenda, Guinea international Mohamed Camara and the highly-experienced Fabian Lustenberger.

Which signing will be most impactful?
Polish midfielder Lukasz Lakomy has hit the ground running after arriving from Zaglebie Lubin for €1.4m. After featuring as a holding midfielder, YB think he will offer more as a box-to-box piston.

GALATASARAY

Star-studded line-up

The watchword for the Turkish champions in their summer transfer business was star quality, persuading Argentine loanee striker Mauro Icardi to sign on permanently after a successful loan spell last season, and recruiting Premier League wingers Hakim Ziyech and Wilfried Zaha from Chelsea and Crystal Palace respectively.

Star signing... Wilfried Zaha

What is Galatasaray's secret weapon?
While Gala often play a neat, slick, short-passing game, they regularly mix it up with a more direct approach, playing long balls in behind. Goalkeeper Fernando Muslera is one of the main providers of such passes, as is midfielder Sergio Oliveira, who also specialises in switching the play from wing to wing.

COACH
Okan Buruk
A Turkish title winner with Basaksehir and Galatasaray.

KEY MAN
Wilfried Zaha
Zaha chose Gala over Atletico Madrid, Lazio and Saudi Arabia.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Kerem Akturkoglu
Effervescent little winger with mazy dribbling and pace.

How important is Dries Mertens?
Okan Buruk tends to use the Belgian in a hybrid role: part second striker, part number ten. During his time at Napoli, he was regularly deployed as a false nine and his current brief is close to a carbon copy, utilising his technical skills, imagination and ability in transition.

What are Galatasaray's strengths?
Defensively, they are very well drilled, with an excellent mid-block pressing game and a compact shape. On the counter, they are quick and cunning and boast an abundance of wing craft.

PSV

New coach and new goalscorers

First and foremost, PSV will be hoping for much less toxicity in the camp this campaign, with former coach Ruud van Nistelrooy quitting the club last spring before their final Eredivisie game of the season – a crucial one in PSV's attempts to seal Champions League football this term. Peter Bosz's first task as coach will be to engender unity within the group.

Wicked winger ...Noa Lang

How will PSV replace last season's top goalscorer Xavi Simons?
Simons was so versatile that he required two replacements. As a left-winger, his spot will belong to Noa Lang, while his old attacking midfield berth should be contested by young guns Malik Tillman, who impressed while on loan at Rangers from Bayern Munich last season, and 18-year-old academy graduate Isaac Babadi, who has been turning heads with his exceptional form this summer.

COACH
Peter Bosz
Former head coach of Ajax, Dortmund, Leverkusen and Lyon.

KEY MAN
Noa Lang
Irrepressible Dutch winger with brilliant one-on-one ability. Recently signed from Club Brugge.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Malik Tillman
US international attacking midfielder or striker, on loan from Bayern.

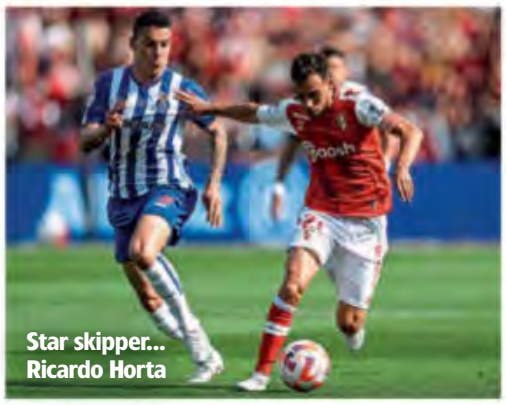
Can Ricardo Pepi deliver the goods?
The 20-year-old United States striker has credit in the bank after a goalscoring stint in the Eredivisie with Groningen last season. But the fact remains that he was a $20m bust at former club Augsburg, not registering one goal in six months.

With star midfielder Ibrahim Sangare set to leave, who will take his place?
The role of midfield anchor should pass to Dutch international Jerdy Schouten, who recently signed from Bologna. A product of the Den Haag youth system, the 26-year-old believes that a return to the Netherlands will best serve his ambition of becoming an *Oranje* regular.

BRAGA

Portugal's best underdogs

Now fully established as the biggest threat to the Portuguese "Big Three" of Benfica, Sporting and Porto, winning the Portuguese Cup in 2021 and finishing third in the league last season, Braga also have a reputation for delivering in Europe, winning the Intertoto Cup in 2008 and reaching the final of the Europa League in 2010-11. This season will be their ninth consective campaign in European comptetition.


Star skipper... Ricardo Horta

Did new centre-back Jose Fonte make a mistake by declaring that Braga were good enough to be Portuguese champions?
Fonte, of course, has the right to call it as he sees it. Why not dare to dream? But he probably would have been wiser to keep his own counsel on the matter. Braga are at their most dangerous in the role of underdog and, shortly after his comments, suffered a shock domestic league defeat at home to Famalicao.

COACH
Artur Jorge
A player, youth coach and manager at Braga, on and off, since 1986.

KEY MAN
Ricardo Horta
When Braga's captain plays well, the team plays well.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Victor Gomez
Attack-minded Spain U21 right-back. Recently signed permanently after an impressive loan from Espanyol.

What is Ricardo Horta's best position?
Thanks to his prodigious technical gifts, creativity and goalscoring nous, Portugal international Horta can literally line up anywhere in the attacking third. Last season, for example, he started out in his favourite spot on the left wing, only to be moved to a striking brief when Vitinha moved to Marseille mid-season.

Is Bruma in line for a Portugal recall?
Bruma, who has not played for Portugal for over four years, generally has been performing to a high standard since arriving at Braga early this year. He is lightning quick, skilful, very direct and extremely dangerous in counter-attacks. Can play as a winger or a number ten.

MACCABI HAIFA

Taking a coaching gamble

Newly-appointed Maccabi head coach Messay Dego faces the most complicated of tasks in taking over from the legendary Barak Bakhar at the helm of the Greens. Everything that Bakhar touched turn to gold during his time in charge, winning three consecutive Israeli league titles and qualifying Maccabi for the 2022-23 Champions League.

Does Dego have enough experience?
The smart money says no. He has led five different sides in Israel, but latterly was working with Maccabi's juniors. Their record in the UEFA Youth League group phase last season – five defeats and a single victory – is not a good omen.

Israeli champions ...Maccabi Haifa

Will Maccabi regret the departure of Omer Atzili, who controversially left for UAE outfit Al Ain?
Atzili, equally comfortable turning on the style on the wing as he is performing with guile as an attacking midfielder, was the man who made Maccabi tick, earning rave reviews last term for his inventiveness and shooting accuracy from open play or set-pieces. He has not, at the time of writing, been adequately replaced, which looks to have left Maccabi rather light in attack.

COACH
Messay Dego
Steered Maccabi's youth team to the title last season.

KEY MAN
Dia Saba
The 30-year-old playmaker or centre-forward has a wand of a left-foot and 11 Israel caps.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Erik Shuranov
The ex-Nuremberg striker has swiftly settled in as an impact substitute.

Who is Maccabi's secret weapon?
Watch out for French left-back Pierre Cornud, 25, whose dynamic forward bursts, clever inter-play and excellent crosses constitute a large proportion of Maccabi's attacking threat. Failed to make the pro grade in his homeland at Montpellier and Dijon, but successfully rebuilt his career in Spain.

Play-Off Contenders

AEK ATHENS

New home, new luck

In their first season at the Agia Sophia stadium, the Yellow-and-Blacks of AEK Athens marked the dawning of a fresh era in the best possible way, completing a momentous league and cup double. Their triumph in last season's Greek Super League was only their second national title in 29 years.

How have AEK been affected by the murder of a fan prior to August's qualifier against Dinamo Zagreb?
The devastating demise of Michalis Katsouris, who died from stab wounds, left the entire Athenian club in a state of profound shock and sorrow. On the field, the tragedy appears to have galvanised AEK, with every player giving that little bit extra to honour Katsouris' memory.

Club in mourning...AEK players observe a minute's silence for Katsouris

COACH
Matias Almeyda
Former Lazio and Argentina midfielder and River Plate boss.

KEY MAN
Levi Garcia
Speedy and bullish Trinidadian striker.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Zine
A 21-year-old forward signed from Angolan club Primeiro de Agosto.

Where are AEK weakest?
Probably on the right side, where French full-back Djibril Sidibe and Swedish wide-man Niclas Eliasson both seem to lack confidence. The pair have been giving the ball away too cheaply, and their lack of attacking chemistry will worry Almeyda.

Who best represents AEK's never-say-die spirit?
The centre-back pairing of Cameroon's Harold Moukoudi and Croatia mainstay Domagoj Vida. The latter is a battler by nature and Moukoudi, all athleticism and power, is cut from the same cloth.

RAKOW CZESTOCHOWA

Football fairy tale writ large

Just six years ago, Rakow Czestochowa were playing in the Polish third division. Now they are the reigning national champions, winning their first-ever Ekstraklasa crown last spring, just four years after breaking into the top flight. Polish Cup winners in 2021 and 2022.

Some see Rakow as a soulless, nouveau riche club. Is that fair?
The Silesians have come a long way in a short space of time and owner Michal Swierczewski, a successful computer businessman, is one of the richest men in Poland. But that does not make Rakow a Paris Saint-Germain or an RB Leipzig. Their owner is a lifelong fan and their two most expensive signings, centre-back Stratos Svarnas and midfielder Deian Sorescu, only cost €800,000 each.

Fairy-tale story ...Rakow

COACH
Dawid Szwarga
Former assistant to Marek Papszun, who stepped down in the summer.

KEY MAN
Vladan Kovacevic
Bosnian keeper voted best in the league last season.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
John Yeboah
Outstanding attacker for Slask Wroclaw last term.

How significant is the coach change?
Hugely. Marek Papszun was the primary architect of Rakow's rise, overseeing two promotions, two Polish Cup wins and last season's title. Dawid Szwarga, his assistant for the last two years, has huge shoes to fill in his first managerial role aged just 32.

How do Rakow set up tactically?
Normally it's a 3-4-3 characterised by a high press, fast transitions, marauding wing-backs and lots of positional interchanging. The attacking workload is very much shared: Last season, six players scored eight goals or more.

RANGERS

Point to prove after last season

Arguably the most important item on the Ibrox agenda this season is to win back the Scottish Premiership from Celtic, but the Champions League cannot merely be a passing fancy for the Gers. Just one group-stage appearance in the last decade – losing all six of last term's fixtures – is simply not good enough.

Who will lead the Rangers line?
The Gers signed four strikers in the close season: Cyriel Dessers (Cremonese), Sam Lammers (Atalanta), Danilo (Feyenoord) and Abdallah Sima (Brighton). Sima and Dessers seem to have the edge right now.

Can Todd Cantwell emerge as a real force on the European scene?
Since arriving at Ibrox from Norwich in January, the Norfolk native has played so well that some in Glasgow have dubbed him the most exciting Ibrox signing since a certain Paul Gascoigne. Hyperbole? Almost certainly, however the early signs have been extremely positive.

Star man... Todd Cantwell

COACH
Michael Beale
Steven Gerrard's assistant for three years. This is his first full season as Rangers boss.

KEY MAN
James Tavernier
The skipper and right-back is a man for the big occasion.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Jose Cifuentes
Ecuador midfielder signed from LAFC.

Who could be Rangers' comeback kid in the months ahead?
The Scotland international centre-back John Souttar had a nightmarish first year at Rangers after arriving from Hearts in 2022, absent for much of the campaign with persistent ankle trouble. But he's now fit again and is, at last, showing what he is really made of. Combative and brave, he is especially strong at bringing the ball out from the back.

FC COPENHAGEN

The undisputed kings of Denmark

The only Danish club to have ever reached the knockout stages of the Champions League – doing so in 2010-11 before losing to Chelsea in the last 16 – the Lions claimed their 15th Superliga title last term and now share the all-time record for Danish crowns with fallen giants KB of Copenhagen.

How should one assess their summer transfer business?
Let's give them a B+. Norway winger Mohamed Elyounoussi, previously with Basel, Celtic and Southampton, offers a great deal of craft and experience; left-back Birger Meling (ex-Rennes) is a much underrated performer, while

Teenage talent... Roony Bardghji

Tunisia wide-man Elias Achouri, acquired from Viborg, is an exceptional talent.

Does the team have a weak link at centre-forward?
It would appear so. Newly-signed Swede Jordan Larsson (son of the iconic Henrik) was among the goals in qualifying but does have limitations, while 19-year-old Icelander Orri Oskarsson is still a work in progress. The much-travelled Andreas Cornelius (ex-Trabzonspor, Parma, Cardiff City, Bordeaux and Atalanta), back at his home club at 30, has injury concerns.

Where are they strongest?
Undoubtedly on the flanks, where they can call on Elyounoussi, Achouri, Roony Bardghji and the Portuguese Diogo Goncalves. The latter may not have explosive pace, but he is intelligent, hard-working and excellent at both dribbling and finishing. The 26-year-old has been among the goals since arriving in January.

COACH
Jacob Neestrup
The 35-year-old has served as youth-team boss, assistant and, since September 2022, head coach.

KEY MAN
Viktor Claesson
The winger scored two extra-time goals versus Sparta Prague in qualifying.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Roony Bardghji
The winger made a head-turning debut in 2021 aged just 16.

MOLDE

Norway's runaway champions

The old stomping ground of Ole Gunnar Solskjaer and Erling Haaland, Molde won last season's Norwegian title (2022) at a canter, finishing no fewer than 18 points ahead of runners-up Bodo/Glimt. Molde proved especially strong in the second half of the campaign, when they racked up 17 consecutive wins. This season so far has proven to be less fruitful.

Should Erling Moe be concerned with his team's domestic slump in 2023?
After winning the championship so convincingly in 2022, Molde have looked a pale shadow of their old all-conquering selves. Not as focused and resilient as they were last season

Vital player... Martin Linnes

and dropping far too many careless points. Has complacency kicked in? Coach Moe has to find answers.

Are Molde better with a back three?
Last season, Moe's decision to switch from a back four to a back three worked wonders. They were much more solid, conceding just 25 goals in 30 Eliteserien matches. But in the current campaign, the same defensive set-up has not proved nearly as effective, regularly shipping water. It may be time for another switch.

How big a miss is 2022 top scorer David Datro Fofana?
The striker joined Chelsea in January, leaving a huge hole at the point of the Molde attack. Fofana was very much the team's cutting edge last season; all his team-mates had to do was to play him in and the bustling Ivorian would do the rest, outfighting and outpacing any marker. Simply irreplaceable.

COACH
Erling Moe
Apart from a short spell at Kristiansund in 2011, he has spent his entire coaching career at Molde.

KEY MAN
Martin Linnes
The all-action right wing-back is vital.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Sivert Mannsverk
The 23-year-old playmaker is a target for English, Italian and Dutch clubs.

PANATHINAIKOS

Punching above their weight again

Runners-up in the Greek Super League last campaign, the Greens have a proud tradition of punching above their weight in Europe's premier club competition. In 1970-71, they surpassed all expectations by reaching the final of the European Cup – where they lost to Johan Cruyff's Ajax – and were Champions League semi-finalists in 1984-85 and 1995-96.

Is Panathinaikos' defensive unit cut out for the Champions League?
Coach Ivan Jovanovic, a details man, has done an excellent job of coordinating his back line, and in the Iceland central defender Hordur Magnusson he has a fine commander of operations, a leader by voice and example and an infectiously

Upset...Panathinaikos celebrate beating French side Marseille in qualifying

gutsy competitor. Italian goalkeeper Alberto Brignoli is first-rate too.

Who provides their creativity?
The role of playmaker belongs to new Serb signing Filip Djuricic, a footballing wanderer who has played in Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, Portugal and England. Perfectly two-footed, he is very strong on the ball and quick to pick out a defence-splitting pass. Ably supported in the invention department by Argentine winger Daniel Mancini.

The two defensive midfielders set the tone in Jovanovic's 4-2-3-1 system. Who will man it in Europe?
Tonny Vilhena and the club's Spanish skipper, Ruben Perez, are the first-choice anchors, the leaders of the Jovanovic counter-pressing strategy. Both are adaptable and read the game very well. Another name in the enforcer mix is the Brazilian Willian Arao, who recently arrived from Fenerbahce.

COACH
Ivan Jovanovic
In charge since 2021, the Serb famously took APOEL to the quarter-finals in 2011-12.

KEY MAN
Tonny Vilhena
Dutch midfielder still waiting to fulfil the promise he showed as a teenager at Feyenoord.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Fotis Ioannidis
Talented striker who broke into the Greece team last season.

XA
CASTORE
Barmenia

HONED FOR COACHING

After playing under some of the finest managers of the last 20 years, Xabi Alonso is equipped to succeed as a coach

Words: Nick Bidwell

Could Xabi Alonso, so impressive as a rookie coach at Bayer Leverkusen last term, be set for a coaching career at the very top of the game?

Certainly Bayern Munich, one of his former clubs, would be interested. When Alonso strutted his stuff for the Bavarians in the final act (2014-17) of a magnificent playing career, the suits at the Allianz Arena often went out of their way to sing the praises of the Basque midfield traffic cop, commending him for his leadership qualities, tactical awareness and consummate ability to pull the strings in the middle of the park. Whether hinted at or bluntly on the record, the word from the Bayern boardroom was that they held Alonso's football IQ in the highest regard and would dearly love to employ him as a coach one day.

"He's the best central midfielder we've had in recent years," said the then-Bayern CEO Karl-Heinz Rummenigge in an interview with *Kicker* magazine in April 2019. "He wasn't the quickest, but of all the players I've ever seen in our midfield, he was the most intelligent and the best strategically. He was a wonderful player, who could speak four languages, including German. He was a real personality. He's someone I'd like to see back at Bayern as a coach. He's now in Spain learning his coaching trade. My opinion is that we must make an effort to bring him back to Bayern at some point."

Some four years later, Rummenigge's effusive appraisal is now common currency in the corridors of power of many top European sides, particularly those others that he served with such distinction as a player: Real Sociedad, Liverpool and Real Madrid. If any of them were already considering Alonso as a manager for the future, then their interest would have certainly been piqued by his exceptional work as a lifesaver at Leverkusen in 2022-23, his first senior coaching job.

Alonso, headhunted by Leverkusen in October 2022 following the sacking of Gerardo Seoane, surveyed a scene of absolute carnage on arriving at the BayArena. Usually to be found in the upper echelons of the Bundesliga, the Rhineland outfit were in all sorts of trouble sitting second-from-bottom in the standings – with only five points from a possible 24 – dysfunctional in virtually every area of the field and with morale at rock bottom. Decay and confusion reigned.

Leverkusen were clearly taking something of a risk in appointing Alonso. Thanks to a glittering playing career, interspersed with titles galore as a Spanish international and Champions League triumphs with Liverpool and Real Madrid, he was unquestionably a top-drawer name.

Nevertheless, as a coach in his own right, Alonso arrived in Germany with plenty to prove, his technical area experience limited to a stint with Real Madrid's Under-14s and the Real Sociedad B team.

Even a coach with an extensive track record would have felt a degree of trepidation when faced with a Bayer Leverkusen in the emergency room. Yet Alonso took it all in his stride, quickly restoring confidence and stability before plotting an inexorably upward course, not only securing European qualification via a sixth-place finish in the Bundesliga but also reaching the semi-finals of the Europa League, where they eventually lost to Roma. The chances of going one step further this time, with another year under Alonso's direction and the addition of talents like Granit Xhaka (Arsenal), Victor Boniface (Union Saint-Gilloise), Arthur (America Mineiro), Jonas Hofmann (Borussia Monchengladbach) and Alex Grimaldo (Benfica), are high.

For many years now, Leverkusen have had to live with the label of "exciting but flawed", a one-dimensional, damn the torpedoes team which only wanted to flood forward. Under Alonso, however, the *Werkself* have suddenly embraced balance and substance. Out with the defensive naivety and whirlwind of offensive chaos. In its place, greater compactness and teamwork, a pronounced love of defending and a more studied attacking approach. Their possession play and pressing schemes are much better too.

Back in the spring, Alonso's Leverkusen showed their mettle with a hot Bundesliga streak of eight unbeaten games, a sequence featuring an excellent 2-1 home win over Bayern

Munich. Here was a tactical test which Alonso and his charges passed with flying colours, disciplined and purposeful throughout, going toe-to-toe with Bayern in midfield and creating no end of opposition panic with their pacy vertical bursts.

Key to the Bayern scalp was Alonso's decision to switch the technically accomplished Robert Andrich from his usual defensive midfield role to that of sweeper. The realigned Leverkusen found it much easier to play through the Bayern press and, with Andrich constantly shuttling between the back line and midfield, Bayern never came close to solving the conundrum.

"This was outstanding from Xabi," opined Leverkusen chief executive Simon Rolfes. "After 20 minutes, Bayern had to change shape and we had the flexibility to react to it. Rob [Andrich] did well at the back and made a difference when moving into midfield, where Bayern never were able to outnumber us."

It should come as no surprise that Alonso the coach is currently displaying the nous that made him such a special player: the ability to read a game, to anticipate opposition chess moves and to swiftly solve problems. He has a natural authority and players will always respect footballers of his world-class status. His CV of world and European titles very much chimes with those who aspire to tread a similar path.

What many German football pundits were not expecting from Alonso was his infectious enthusiasm for the challenge at Leverkusen, his total implication in the "project". Both before and during a game, he cuts the most animated and energetic of figures and certainly is not one of those head coaches who stands by impassively while his assistants run a training session. He much prefers to be in the thick of it, teaching, explaining, taking part in the exercises and even on hand to put out the cones and the dummies. The apposite phrase is "hands on". During a pre-game warm-up, he often takes a side-kick part in the goalkeeping drills.

Europa League... Leverkusen were knocked out at the semi-final stage last season

He was always likely to find a niche for himself in elite-level coaching. Leadership is in his DNA and he has a remarkable array of top-class coaching influences to draw ideas from having played under some of the very best. Of the 15 managers that have won the Champions League in the 21st century, Alonso played under five of them (Vicente del Bosque, Rafael Benitez, Jose Mourinho, Carlo Ancelotti and Pep Guardiola). Moreover, in each case, he didn't just feature in the squad, but played a key role in trophy-winning teams, often providing a coach's voice on the pitch. If ever a player had had a career tailored towards coaching at the top level, it was Alonso.

> Of the 15 managers that have won the Champions League in the 21st century, Alonso played under five of them (Del Bosque, Benitez, Mourinho, Ancelotti and Guardiola)

The son of former Spanish international Periko Alonso – a combative defensive midfielder who won two La Liga titles with Real Sociedad in the early 1980s and also played for Barcelona and Spain – Xabi has spent his entire life immersed in football culture, and how it shows. The game, for him, is not simply about fame or economic well-being. Deep within him is an intellectual curiosity for the nuts and bolts of the sport and throughout his playing career he has soaked up information like a sponge.

His decision, in 2014, to call time on a five-year tour of duty at Real Madrid and move to Bayern Munich perfectly sums up his mindset, the perpetual quest for as much soccer knowledge as he could muster. At the age of 32 going on 33, he might have embraced the easy option of a stint in MLS or in China. Instead he chose Bayern, where he would have the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to discover the trade secrets of Guardiola, the man he calls "a visionary".

Alonso is too intelligent, too much his own man, to merely offer a carbon-copy impersonation of Pep. The nicest way to put it is they share a manual of principles: the tactical finesse, positional awareness, eye for detail, extensive analysis, emotional control and need for dominance and intensity.

Ancelotti – who while in charge at Real Madrid, dubbed Alonso "*El Profesor*" for the authority with which the latter went about his business – provided the pupil with a great deal of coaching insight too, particularly with regard to man-management, diplomacy and organisational adaptability, fitting a system around the characteristics of the players available to him. Just as Ancelotti has been on an ever-spinning merry-go-round of formation shape-shifting at Milan, PSG, Napoli and now Real, Alonso refuses to be tied down by dogma. As the coach of the Real Sociedad B team, he invariably used a 4-2-3-1 or 4-3-3. Now at Leverkusen, he favours a 3-4-3 or a 3-5-2, though on occasion does shift to a four-man defence.

"A visionary"... Alonso was hugely influenced by Pep Guardiola

CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE

ALVARO ARBELOA
The former Real Madrid and Spain right-back is one of Xabi's closest friends in football. Arbeloa is currently in charge of Real Madrid's Under-19s and would be Xabi's likely number two if he should ever return to the Bernabeu as head coach.

PERIKO ALONSO
Xabi's father was a fine pro himself, an industrious, no-nonsense holding midfielder. His steely mentality and selfless attitude most definitely has coloured Xabi's view of the game, that spectacle is not the be-all and end-all. Periko was Xabi's first-team coach at Real Sociedad for a short spell in 2000.

PEP GUARDIOLA
Alonso spent two years (2014-16) under the tutelage of Guardiola at Bayern Munich, a front-row seat from where he could marvel at the Catalan maestro's philosophy of control, flexibility and intelligence. "He is an influence to every manager," said Alonso of his old boss recently.

FLORENTINO PEREZ
The long-serving Real Madrid president is known to be an unconditional admirer of Xabi, both as a player and a coach. Rumours abound that Perez has placed Xabi in pole position to succeed Carlo Ancelotti, who is rumoured to take over the Brazil national team at the end of this season.

ROBERTO OLABE
Real Sociedad's director of sport for the last five years, he was responsible for bringing in Xabi in the summer of 2019 to run the San Sebastian outfit's reserve team. Xabi did sterling work there for three seasons and Olabe insists the door will always be open if Xabi wants to return to Sociedad one day.

SEBASTIAN PARRILLA
Alonso's trusty number two who has worked alongside him in the Real Madrid youth ranks, Sociedad and now in Germany with Leverkusen. Parrilla, 46, spent the best part of two decades working in Real Madrid's developmental system.

On the face of it, Jose Mourinho's abrasiveness appears light years from Alonso's reputation as a dressing-room peacemaker. Xabi insists, though, that the Special One is indeed just that, ahead of the game when it comes to channels of communication with his players, his ability to empathise and motivate. "I learnt much from Jose," declared Alonso prior to a Europa League clash with Mourinho's Roma last spring. "How to be a leader, how to convince a team to fight for an objective. Jose is very good at that."

And so, apparently, is Xabi Alonso.

Influences... Alonso has played under some of the best coaches around

30 eye-catching transfers

Jamie Evans identifies the summer's most interesting transfer movements

RASMUS HOJLUND

(Atalanta to Manchester United)

1 As a tall, powerful, deceptively quick Scandinavian striker with a powerful left foot arriving in Manchester, the similarities between Hojlund and Erling Haaland are obvious and inevitable, and will probably be made regularly as the season goes on.

Indeed, the comparisons go even further: after making his debut in his home country, Hojlund also moved to Austria, where he sufficiently impressed for Sturm Graz to earn a move to Atalanta last summer. The Dane does not have the same off-the-scale scoring numbers as Haaland in club football – ten goals for the Italian side took him to 27 in four seasons – but six goals in six caps for Denmark suggests that he has the ability to handle a step up in class.

Manchester United may not welcome the comparison, given that they view Hojlund as one for the future, but he has the potential to have an instant impact, not least by allowing Marcus Rashford to operate exclusively from his preferred left-wing position.

NICOLAS JACKSON

(Villarreal to Chelsea)

2 Chelsea's new forward has done well in avoiding the club's "cursed" number nine shirt. The last player to score 20 league goals in it was Jimmy-Floyd Hasslebaink in 2001-02. Since then, Mateja Kezman, Hernan Crespo, Fernando Torres, Radamel Falcao, Alvaro Morata, Gonzalo Higuain, Romelu Lukaku and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang have all worn the shirt number without living up to their reputations or price tags.

The Senegal star has, in the hope of having some better luck, instead opted for number 15, and was actually close to moving to the Premier League last January before a hamstring injury saw him fail a medical at Bournemouth. Since recovering, he has been in fine form, ending the season with ten goals in his final 11 La Liga games for Villarreal, before showing even more encouraging signs for Chelsea in pre-season.

At 22 years old, he has plenty of time on his side, but Stamford Bridge is not a place that is known for it patience. It could be a case of sink or swim in Jackson's first Premier League season.

Leading the line for the Blues ...Jackson

New Red Devils striker...Hojlund

Saudi Pro League pull...Fofana joins a host of stars moving to the Middle East

SEKO FOFANA

(Lens to Al Nassr)

3 The rise of the Saudi Pro League has dominated the summer transfer window, with the likes of Neymar, Karim Benzema and N'Golo Kante leading the exodus. Yet of all the players to have departed for the Saudi Arabian top flight, Fofana is arguably the one with the most still to offer Europe's major leagues.

In the last three years he only missed 11 league matches for Lens, establishing himself as one of the most consistent and impressive midfielders in Ligue 1. Named in the division's Team of the Season in both of the past two campaigns, his performances were central to Lens' second-place finish in 2022-23. Having only just turned 28, the Ivory Coast international seemed to have the world at his feet, either by continuing as Lens' main man in their first Champions League campaign for over 20 years, or elsewhere – his displays had seen him linked with several Premier League clubs, while Paris Saint-Germain were rumoured to be ready to bring him back to his home city.

His decision to join Cristiano Ronaldo at Al Nassr is indicative of the pulling power that Saudi Arabia has.

Big boots to fill...Beltran

LUCAS BELTRAN

(River Plate to Fiorentina)

4 Fiorentina had a space to fill up front after the departure to Benfica of striker Arthur Cabral. The Brazilian only scored ten Serie A goals after arriving from Basel in January 2022, but he fired the club to last season's Europa Conference League final with seven goals.

Beltran, then, has big boots to fill. And if that wasn't enough pressure, the 22-year-old has already been compared with Gabriel Batistuta, Fiorentina's all-time record scorer in Serie A. Can the striker, nicknamed "The Viking" for his pale skin and reddish beard, live up to the hype? Only two players scored more goals in the most recent Argentine top-flight season, although 12 goals in 25 games (16 starts) is not exactly unstoppable form.

If he can find his goalscoring boots in Florence, it will not just be fans of the *Viola* that take notice. Following the success of Mateo Retegui (see opposite), Beltran was another Argentine player with Italian roots to be identified by ex-Italy boss Roberto Mancini as a potential *Azzurri* target.

Standout signing... Nakamura

KEITO NAKAMURA

(LASK to Reims)

5 It has been an interesting summer for French club Reims, who impressed so much under 30-year-old Englishman Will Still in the second half of last season. They have lost a number of key players, including top scorer Folarin Balogun, who returned to Arsenal after his loan spell, plus midfielders Dion Lopy and Jens Cajuste (see opposite), while the €25m sale of Hugo Ekitike to Paris Saint-Germain boosted the bank balance.

They have reinvested: Malta international Teddy Teuma was signed after four years as Union Saint-Gilloise's midfield heartbeat, ex-Genk centre-back Joseph Okuma also arrived from Belgium, while Mohamed Daramy is an exciting addition from Ajax. Yet Nakamura appears to be their standout signing.

Last season, the Japan international was one of the standout performers in Austrian football, scoring 14 goals and assisting four for LASK. At his best when cutting in from the left wing, he is a speedy dribbler with superb finishing from the edge of the box.

THE REST

ROSS BARKLEY
(Nice to Luton Town)
When Barkley made his England debut back in 2013, Luton were in non-league. Now he is attempting to revitalise his career at the Premier League new boys.

CARLOS BORGES
(Manchester City to Ajax)
Like Romeo Lavia last summer, winger Borges has left City for an eight-figure sum without playing in the first team after impressing in the Premier League 2, scoring 21 goals in 24 games last season.

JENS CAJUSTE
(Reims to Napoli)
Cajuste joins the Italian champions after only 18 months in France. *Gli Azzurri* have a great track record in the transfer market, and look to have struck gold again with the silky Sweden midfielder.

KIM MIN-JAE
(Napoli to Bayern Munich)
The giant South Korea stopper continues his rise by joining his third European club in as many years. Had plenty of admirers after last year's *Scudetto* victory.

SAMUEL CHUKWUEZE
(Villarreal to Milan)
Long admired as a player of huge promise, this €27.8m move feels almost overdue. The left-footed right-winger could form a thrilling front line alongside Portugal flyer Rafael Leao on the other flank.

ARTEM DOVBYK
(Dnipro-1 to Girona)
The 26-year-old joined Spanish outfit Girona for a club-record fee after securing back-to-back Golden Boots in the Ukrainian Premier League. A tall, powerful striker with a crafty left foot.

Debut goal... Dovbyk for Girona

DAICHI KAMADA
(Eintracht Frankfurt to Lazio)
Quite how the Japan international remained unemployed for so long after his Frankfurt contract expired is a mystery. The talented midfielder could be a massive hit at Lazio, but has big boots to fill in trying to replace Sergej Milinkovic-Savic.

LEE KANG-IN
(Valencia to Paris Saint-Germain)
Long touted as an exciting talent, the 22-year-old South Korea international was one of La Liga's best dribblers in 2022-23. Exceptional free-kick taker and now ready for the step up.

VIKTOR GYOKERES
(Coventry City to Sporting)
At times the Swedish striker was simply too good for the Championship, and last season turned his physical and technical dominance into regular goals. Scored two goals in two minutes on his Portuguese league debut.

Quick-fire brace... Gyokeres for Sporting

RUBEN LOFTUS-CHEEK
(Chelsea to Milan)
There is a sense that there is still more to come from the England international. Perhaps a move to Serie A can unlock his full potential.

CASTELLO LUKEBA
(Lyon to RB Leipzig)
A 20-year-old left-sided defender signed to replace Josko Gvardiol. At €30m he is RB's fourth-biggest signing of all time; when they spend big, they tend to get it right.

IGNACIO MIRAMON
(Gimnasia y Esgrima to Lille)
Given his debut by Diego Maradona in 2020, the young Argentine is a tough-tackling midfielder with a pleasing-on-the-eye passing range.

RICARDO PEPI
(Augsburg to PSV)
A promising USA international (seven goals in 16 caps) who joins PSV after scoring 12 Eredivisie goals on loan at Groningen last season.

MATEO RETEGUI
(Boca Juniors to Genoa)
A long-awaited move to Serie A for the Argentine-born Italy striker. Scored on his international debut in March against England, and now tasked with leading Genoa's attack on their top-flight return.

TIAGO SANTOS
(Estoril to Lille)
Right-back in *World Soccer*'s Primeira Liga Team of the Year in his first senior campaign last season. The 21-year-old was prevented from joining Benfica by an "anti-rival" clause invoked by former club Sporting.

ANDRE SILVA
(RB Leipzig to Real Sociedad)
The nomadic striker joins Real Sociedad on loan to lead their return to the Champions League. Scored 28 Bundesliga goals for Eintracht Frankfurt in 2020-21, but failed to replicate that in Leipzig.

XAVI SIMONS
(Paris Saint-Germain to RB Leipzig)
Last year we picked out the young Dutchman as one to watch after he joined PSV; this time he has stepped up to the Bundesliga by joining RB Leipzig on loan after PSG triggered their €6m buy-back clause.

MILAN SKRINIAR
(Inter to Paris Saint-Germain)
A key player for his first five-and-a-half years at Inter, Skriniar was frozen out by Simone Inzaghi after agreeing a pre-contract with the French champions in January.

MARCUS THURAM
(Borussia M'gladbach to Inter)
The exciting forward joins the Champions League runners-up on a Bosman after his highest-scoring season to date, notching 16 goals in all competitions.

EL BILAL TOURE
(Almeria to Atalanta)
The Italians' reputation for smart recruitment means that when they break their transfer record it's worth paying attention. The Malian will replace Hojlund.

LESLEY UGOCHUKWU
(Rennes to Chelsea)
The 19-year-old is the latest exciting talent from Rennes' academy, following the likes of Ousmane Dembele and Eduardo Camavinga.

BRANCO VAN DEN BOOMEN
(Toulouse to Ajax)
A deep-lying playmaker strong on passing range and set-piece accuracy but lacking mobility, he has made an instant impact on returning to Ajax nine years after they released him.

ALEJO VELIZ
(Rosario to Tottenham Hotspur)
The 19-year-old striker joined Spurs as one for the future, but Harry Kane's departure could see him thrust into the first team.

YOUSSEF CHERMITI
(Sporting to Everton)
The Toffees are preaching austerity while waiting for their new Bramley-Moore Dock stadium to be built, so the 19-year-old Portuguese ace is their main attacking reinforcement. The pressure is on his young shoulders.

WILFRIED ZAHA
(Crystal Palace to Galatasaray)
If nothing else, Gala's front line of Zaha, Cedric Bakambu, Mauro Icardi and Dries Mertens should be plenty of fun to watch.

BUFFON BOWS OUT

The iconic Italy goalkeeper finally hangs up his gloves after an extraordinary career

Words: Paddy Agnew

"It ends here. You have given me everything. I gave you my all. We won together".

With this brief post on Instagram in the first week of August, 45-year-old Gianluigi Buffon, a living legend of Italian football, finally announced the end of his playing career after almost 30 years. Writing in *La Repubblica*, veteran critic Maurizio Crosetti suggested that Buffon managed to avoid the only real "terror" of his football career. Namely, as the player himself put it: "That one day others would have to tell me to give up, rather [than making] this decision myself".

Appropriately enough, Buffon's stellar career ended where it had all begun, at Parma. It was back in November 1995 that the then-17-year-old reserve goalkeeper at the Stadio Ennio Tardini burst unexpectedly into the limelight, making his professional debut in a 0-0 home draw with the mighty Milan.

Coached by Fabio Capello and on the day starring players such as Paolo Maldini, Franco Baresi, Roberto Baggio, George Weah and Zvonimir Boban, that Milan side was one of the strongest teams in world club football at the time, the team that had emphatically beaten Spanish giants Barcelona 4-0 in the Champions League final in Athens just 18 months earlier. To ask a 17-year-old to make his professional debut against such a team was a big ask.

Parma's first-choice keeper, Luca Bucci, was injured, while second choice, Alessandro Nista, had looked less than impressive in training. Having drafted Buffon into the first-team squad when Bucci got injured, Parma's canny coach Nevio Scala had been much impressed by him during a week of training with team-mates such as Fabio Cannavaro, Gianfranco Zola and Hristo Stoichkov.

On the Saturday before the game, Scala knocked at Buffon's door in the team hotel: "I am thinking of playing you tomorrow against Milan. Is that a problem?"

"No problem," came the immediate reply.

And the rest is history. Buffon's debut made him an overnight sensation. It was not just that he made at least three spectacular saves against Stefano Eranio, Marco Simone and Roberto Baggio to earn the 0-0 home draw, it was also that he had performed with a staggering sense of self-belief and security.

That night, the Italian state broadcaster RAI, in their Sunday round-up programme, highlighted Buffon, stating that "A Star Has Been Born". For Italians the "boy" Buffon came with an impressive sporting pedigree: both his parents had been Italian national athletes, his mother a discus thrower and his father a shot-putter.

Out of luck...Buffon trudges off in 2017 after losing in his third Champions League final

Furthermore, a not so distant relative, Lorenzo Buffon, had kept goal for Italy, as well as for Milan, Genoa, Inter and Fiorentina in the 1950s and early '60s. Speaking to RAI after the game, the young Buffon coolly said: "I didn't go looking for advice from my relative because, in all modesty, I don't go around asking people how you make a good save. If I can manage it myself, then good. If not, no problem."

Just two years later, he made an arguably even more impressive debut with the *Azzurri*. As with Parma, it came about in dramatic circumstances. By now the established Parma keeper, he was called up as a reserve to Gianluca Pagliuca for Italy's crucial World Cup qualification play-off against Russia in Moscow in late October 1997.

However, when Pagliuca got injured after just 32 minutes, head coach Cesare Maldini had no option but to send out the "boy". Notwithstanding a snow blizzard, an impossible pitch and the prize at stake, Buffon's coolness, self-confidence and abundant natural talent did the business. Italy held on for a 1-1 draw, going on to clinch their place in France '98 with a 1-0 victory in the Naples return two weeks later. Once again, Buffon was celebrated as the unexpected national hero of the hour.

By now it was clear that fortune was on his side, as injuries to team-mates had twice kick-started his career. The thing was, though, that Buffon was more than good enough to grab his chance with both hands. You could say that he started at the top and then went higher and higher.

In a 28-year career, he broke record after record. He is the most-capped Italian male international of all time with 176 games for the *Azzurri*, while he also heads the table for Serie A appearances with 657 matches. He played at four World Cup finals (2002, 2006, 2010 and 2014) and was a non-playing reserve in 1998.

His career took a major move forward in 2001 when Juventus coughed up approximately €50m for him in what, at the time, seemed an outrageous price for a goalkeeper. Over the next 17 years with Juve he won, among other things, ten Serie A titles and five Italian Cups – to add to a UEFA Cup and Italian Cup he'd won previously at Parma.

Perhaps more importantly, during that time, he established himself as one of the game's great goalkeepers. Obviously, the climactic moment in a glittering career came in Berlin in 2006 as Italy beat France to win the World Cup. Buffon only conceded two goals en route to the trophy, a joint record.

He has said many times that he cried on the night he won the World Cup. He also cried on the November 2017 night that Italy failed to qualify for Russia 2018 – losing to Sweden – thus depriving him of the chance of attending a sixth World Cup finals.

> He has said many times that he cried on the night he won the World Cup. He also cried on the November 2017 night that Italy failed to qualify for Russia 2018

In some senses, that gut-wrenching World Cup exit, followed five months later by Juve's elimination from the Champions League by Real Madrid, marked the "real" end of Buffon's extraordinary top-class career. The Champions League quarter-final tie with Real ended in explosive fashion with Madrid winning their way to the semi-finals (losing 3-1 on the night, but winning 4-3 on aggregate) thanks to a hotly-disputed 97th-minute penalty,

Heartbreak...Buffon reacts to Italy's failure to qualify for the 2018 World Cup

Finest hour...Buffon kisses the 2006 World Cup trophy

converted by Cristiano Ronaldo.

For once, the cool, collected and experienced Buffon lost it. Outraged by the penalty decision, Buffon launched an hysterical and angry attack on English referee Michael Oliver. Inevitably, Oliver showed him the red card for his one and only Champions League sending-off, an expulsion that later earned him a three-match ban.

Even if Juventus had probably deserved more on the night, scoring three goals to level the aggregate score to 3-3, there was no real doubt about the penalty awarded after Moroccan defender Medhi Benatia had upended Real's Lucas Vazquez. Most untypically, Buffon thundered afterwards: "There must be some sensitivity to understanding the importance of some moments and if you do not have this sensitivity to what's going on in the game, you're not worthy of being on the pitch. In this case, he should be in the stands with his parents, with his friends, with fries and Coca-Cola, and watch the game. You cannot do something like that. This referee doesn't have a heart. He has a rubbish bin instead of a heart."

Those angry, out-of-character words speak volumes about just how much Buffon cared about winning. Football was never "only a game" for Gigi.

That summer, Buffon ended both his Juventus and Italy careers, bowing out of the *Azzurri* with a cap in a prestige friendly against Argentina at the Etihad Stadium, and leaving (or so it seemed) the Old Lady to play one somewhat underwhelming season at Paris Saint-Germain (2018-19).

Baby-faced...Buffon during his debut season at Parma

This unexpected coda to his career was then prolonged when he returned to Italian football for two more "grand old man" seasons alongside Poland goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny at Juventus (2019-21) and then, most surprisingly, two further campaigns in Serie B at his old alma mater, Parma, where it had all began as a 13-year-old.

Club legend...the goalkeeper won ten Serie A titles with Juventus

At the time he first joined Parma, he was playing for a small club called Bonascola in his native Tuscan town of Carrara, best known as the place where the great Renaissance maestro Michelangelo used to search out the marble for many of his masterpieces. He had already been spotted by both Inter and Milan but Parma nipped in by inviting him to a trial. Youth-team coach Ermes Fulgoni watched his trial and was amazed, quickly rushing off to tell his club directors that it would be a crime not to sign this big athletic boy. On top of that, his family preferred Parma, a city much closer to home than Milan.

In the end, of course, this last season at Parma was injury-interrupted, but Buffon did still play in 17 Serie B games for them, turning out for the last time on May 30 against Cagliari in a promotion play-off tie which Parma lost 3-2. At the age of 45, a truly remarkable career was over. No surprise that many Italian supporters consider him the greatest Italy international of all time.

His adventure with the *Azzurri* will, however, go on. His playing career may now be over, but he has already found a new job as "*Capo Delegazione*", a sort of wise old counsellor who travels with the national team, a role previously held by the late Gianluca Vialli. You will be seeing more of him.

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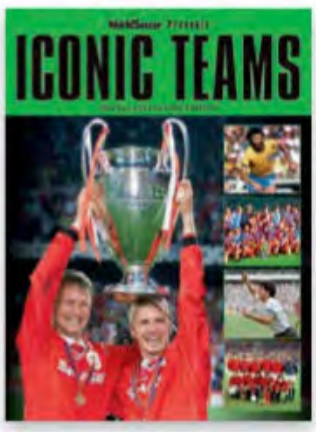

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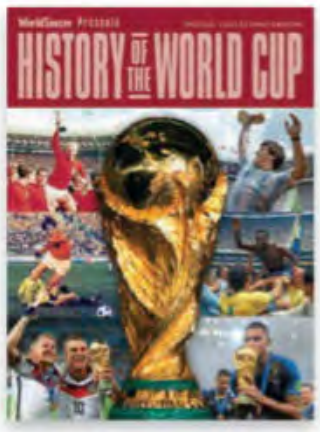

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Spanish prize

Glenn Moore reports on another groundbreaking women's tournament, as Spain overcome England to lift their first major international trophy

Long before Ivana Andres hoisted the trophy towards the night sky in Sydney, some aspects of the Women's World Cup had become abundantly clear: the expansion to 32 teams had been fully justified, women's football is now a major revenue-generator, and the era of US hegemony is over. As for the final itself, it added another pointer: perhaps a Spanish reign of dominance is beginning.

Prior to these finals, *La Roja* had not won a major tournament knockout tie. Now, with that mental hurdle smashed after four in succession, culminating with their 1-0 final win over England, they could have a period of dominance like their men did after breaking through with victory at Euro 2008.

Not only is the core of the team also at Europe's leading club side, Barcelona,

there is also plenty more talent coming through: in the last 12 months, Spain have also won the Under-17 and Under-20 World Cups.

It may be that Spain's biggest problems will be internal, though even then the quality of the player pool may overcome the schisms between the players and the federation, as it did in New Zealand and Australia.

Spain went to the finals with a clutch of key players absent having refused to play under coach Jorge Vilda. There was more controversy after their triumph with federation boss Luis Rubiales, Vilda's protector, kissing Jennifer Hermoso inappropriately.

"I did not like that," said Hermoso afterwards, only to retract the following day via a federation statement released on her behalf. Rubiales later apologised: "I was completely wrong, I have to admit it...I have to apologise, learn from this, and understand that when you are president you have to be more careful."

Pachuca forward Hermoso had emerged as one of the key players in a team that overcame a shock 4-0 humbling by Japan to ease past Switzerland, Netherlands, Sweden and England in a series of confident performances.

Whatever the criticisms of Vilda, he made some bold calls, dropping Alexia Putellas to allow the Aitana Bonmati-Hermoso partnership space and picking Barca's reserve goalkeeper Cata Coll, who made her debut in the last 16.

In the final, Spain tactically outsmarted an England team that had previously been adaptable and resilient, improving as the tournament went on, and went into the final slight favourites.

In the event, Spain punished a loss of possession by Lucy Bronze, with overlapping left-back Olga Carmona scoring the winner, and rarely looked like conceding afterwards. Even Mary Earps' 70th-minute penalty save from Hermoso could not lift England, though had Lauren Hemp's 16th-minute shot gone in, rather than hit the bar, things may have been different.

Sadly, Carmona's joy was short-lived. She was told after the final her father, who had been unwell for some time, had passed away two days earlier.

England will come again. They have a young side, have resisted claims on Sarina Wiegman – for whom this was a second successive World Cup final loss – and will be strengthened by the return of injured players.

In contrast, the US, the world's most successful team, have been plunged into an existential crisis after being knocked out in the round of 16 by Sweden, their worst performance in a major event. The winning penalty in the shootout crossed the line by only a fraction, but they had already been a width of the post away from being eliminated in the group stage.

The issue went beyond the identity of the coach, Vlatko Andonovski, who resigned within days having failed to renew a US team that won in 2019.

Whereas the finalists were both young teams leavened by experience, ten of the 15 US players involved in the exit to Sweden were in their 30th year or older, and three aged 23 or under. With Mallory Swanson injured and Rose Lavelle suspended, only Andi Sullivan and Emily Fox were in the key 25-28 age-range.

Sweden had seven such players, with all but one of the starting XI aged 26-30. That the Swedes would handle the passing of a great generation (Caroline Segar, Linda Sembrant, Nilla Fischer, Sofia Jakobsson and Hedvig Lindahl have all gone from the starting XI that finished third in 2019) better than the US, with the latter's huge playing pool, seems surprising but it highlights structural problems.

Pay-for-play youth systems exclude talent, especially from minorities; players emerge through school and college programmes that prize results over development; the dominant playing philosophy emphasises athleticism over technique; and coaching is often based on a risk-averse command model rather than one that encourages players to think creatively.

While these factors mean the US has stood still, Europe, expanding the player pool and investing in it, has caught up. This has a ripple effect – the only non-European team in the semi-finals, Australia, were heavily reliant on players with experience in England's WSL and in Scandinavia.

Not that Europe is the only place developing rapidly. Home-based players largely made up the squads of quarter-finalists Colombia and Japan – the best team until the last eight.

From the opening match – when to the delight of a nation usually in thrall to rugby, New Zealand stunned Norway – it was clear there had been a levelling of standards, and this despite the leading teams having ever-greater resources.

The newbies told the story: In 2019, the quartet of debutants had lost ten out of 12 matches, winning one; this time there were eight debutants who between them won five and lost 18 of 25 matches. Philippines, Zambia and Portugal all won games while Morocco won two, qualifying for the knockout stages as Africa earned three places in the last 16 for the first time.

Even the three newcomers that failed to gain a point had their moments. Vietnam held the US to 3-0 and

Campeones... **Spain lift the World Cup trophy**

> Spain tactically outsmarted an England team that had previously been adaptable and resilient, improving as the tournament went on, and went into the final slight favourites

Panama scored three against France (albeit shipping six), while Haiti only conceded four goals in three matches, three of them penalties.

Republic of Ireland, the tournament's other debutants, lost by a goal apiece to Australia and Canada, and held Nigeria (who later pushed England to a penalty shootout) to a goalless draw.

In addition, whereas in 2019 the US beat Thailand 13-0, and in 2015 Ecuador and Ivory Coast both conceded ten in matches, the biggest defeat was 7-0, suffered by a tiring Vietnam against Netherlands.

It was not hard to identify reasons for this progress. Some of the minnows were very well organised defensively, testament to excellent coaching by Lorne Donaldson (Jamaica), Nicolas Delepine (Haiti), Francisco Neto (Portugal), Vera Pauw (Ireland), Alen Stajcic (Philippines), and their staffs.

Randy Waldrum (Nigeria) and Desiree Ellis (South Africa) did well too, their teams adding attacking panache to solid defence.

The standard of goalkeeping was also better. There were errors but they were few, as the proliferation of specialist goalkeeping coaches was evident in the improved footwork and handling.

Another factor was the inclusion, in many inexperienced teams, of players drawn from the diaspora who had been exposed to more professional coaching environments from a young age. English-born WSL veterans Drew Spence and Becky Spencer played key roles for Jamaica, the Philippines relied heavily on players who came through the US college system, and Morocco had several players raised in Europe.

Golden Glove winner ...Mary Earps saves Jennifer Hermoso's penalty in the final

It was also reward, though, for investment. King Mohammed VI has backed men's and women's football in Morocco, while players from Haiti and Colombia were among those who benefited from exposure at under-age World Cups.

> **The challenge now, for the hosts and elsewhere, is to build on the momentum generated by the finals**

If there are winners, there must also be losers and the US were not the only under-performers. Euro 2022 runners-up Germany, Olympic champions Canada and South American champions Brazil went out in the group stage, as did Asian champions China, hammered 6-1 by England. Former winners Norway scraped through but, ridden by internal dissent, did not get much further.

Germany's nightmare followed an equally disappointing World Cup for the men. That Martina Voss-Tecklenburg, like Hansi Flick, looks likely to survive perhaps reflects an acceptance that it is not just the coach at fault. Injuries to key defenders were a mitigating factor but, as in the US, a once-dominant culture has stood still. "Due to our success in the female division, we may have rested on our laurels once or twice," admitted German FA sporting director Joti Chatzialexiou.

In Brazil, the post-mortem suggested the problem was changing the culture. Pia Sundhage was supposed to add European practicality and discipline to traditional flair, but many felt the team had become too cautious and lacking in spontaneity.

The Swedish coach took responsibility for the failure, but with the Olympics less than a year away, and Brazil already qualified, looks likely to be given more time to integrate the two philosophies.

China were outclassed while Canada's inability to score goals finally did for them.

It was a sad end for Christine Sinclair, who like Marta was subbed off as their teams exited, as it was also for Megan Rapinoe, whose last World Cup act was to miss a spot-kick. Alex Morgan won't be back either, nor Wendie Renard, and maybe not Alexandra Popp, Kosovare Asllani or Eugenie Le Sommer.

Rising star...Salma Paralluelo of Spain was the Young Player of the Tournament

But new stars emerged. Salma Paralluelo, Teresa Abelleira, Lauren James, Linda Caicedo, Mary Fowler, Jun Endo and Hinata Miyazawa were all under 24, while late developers Zecira Musovic, Clare Hunt and Jess Carter flourished. Sydney FC's unassuming Cortnee Vine, meanwhile, will never go unrecognised in Australia again after scoring the winning penalty in the 20-shot shootout epic against France.

The Matildas now rival the cricket teams as the only truly national side in Australia. By the time that nerve-jangling shootout finished, the nation had gone "Tillies" bonkers, including the rugby league heartland of the eastern seaboard and the Australian rules strongholds of Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth. The England semi-final was the most-watched television programme since records began with nearly half the country tuning in and many more watching on communal open-air screens.

Across the Tasman Sea, while New Zealand did not progress from the group stage they did gain their first World Cup victory, pumping life into sluggish ticket sales. In the event, despite often grim weather, Auckland pulled in six 40,000-plus gates to break the national record for a football match of either gender.

Upset...Morocco advanced to the knockout stages

The challenge now, for the hosts and elsewhere, is to build on the momentum generated by the finals. Will Jamaica, who became the first Caribbean nation to qualify for the knockout rounds despite having to crowd-fund part of their preparation, now be backed by their federation? The likes of Nigeria, South Africa and even England were also among the countries embroiled in pay disputes ahead of the finals. Will other countries in Africa and the Arab world look at the success of Morocco's investment and follow suit? And, as the sport expands, will FIFA, governing bodies and judicial systems protect players from predators and abusers?

There can, though, now be no disputing the sport's forward momentum, or financial clout. Attendances were just shy of two million, averaging more than 30,000 – 9,000 up on 2019. FIFA president Gianni Infantino said that, despite the standoff with broadcasters who paid far less than for Qatar 2022, FIFA had not lost money on the finals, which had generated more than $570m (£447m) in revenues.

With neither host needing to make the huge financial outlay required of, say, an Olympic Games, the event is likely to be second only to the men's World Cup for profitability.

Come the 2027 finals, the interest – and revenues – will be even greater. The location will be decided next May, with four contenders. Solo bids from South Africa and Brazil go up against a US-Mexico joint candidacy, and a three-nation proposal from Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands.

The contest will be fierce. After the impact that this event had in Australasia, the economic benefits, and the legacy it will leave in areas as diverse as tourism and gender equality, both FAs and governments know hosting will be a prized, commercially valuable and socially significant honour.

Matildas fever... supporters gather in Melbourne's Federation Square to watch Australia edge past France

WS Team of the Tournament

Coach: Lorne Donaldson *(Jamaica)*

Subs: Zecira Musovic *(Sweden)*, Jess Carter *(England)*, Jun Endo *(Japan)*, Katrina Gorry *(Australia)*, Jennifer Hermoso *(Spain)*, Catalina Usme *(Colombia)*, Mary Fowler *(Australia)*, Lauren Hemp *(England)*

Drama aplenty

Last-16 shock... United States players during their penalty shootout defeat to Sweden

LAST 16

In the shock of the round, defending champions **United States** were knocked out by **Sweden** in Melbourne – despite finally delivering a performance befitting their quality – largely due to Chelsea goalkeeper Zecira Musovic.

Her saves forced a penalty shootout in which forwards Megan Rapinoe and Sophia Smith both missed the target – the latter would have put the US through had she scored. In sudden death, Kelley O'Hara hit the post then keeper Alyssa Naeher, who had both saved and scored a penalty, failed to keep out Lina Hurtig's kick by what goal-line technology showed was the barest of margins.

The next tie also went to penalties after a goalless 120 minutes, and again the team outplayed won. In this case, **England**'s spot-kick success was more clear-cut, overcoming **Nigeria** 4-2 after Desire Oparanozie and Michelle Alozie missed the Super Falcons' first two. The Lionesses, with Keira Walsh restored to the midfield but nullified by Nigeria's player-for-player marking, played extra-time with ten after Lauren James was dismissed for treading on Alozie.

Sent off...Lauren James commits her red-card offence against Nigeria

Shootouts are compelling, but the tournament had gone five hours without a goal when Caitlin Foord set Sydney's Stadium Australia alight, running on to Mary Fowler's pass to put **Australia** ahead against **Denmark**. The Danes barely threatened and, once Hayley Raso doubled the score, Sam Kerr was able to make a belated finals entrance with a 15-minute cameo.

Earlier, a classy fifth-minute finish in Auckland by Aitana Bonmati had settled **Spain**'s nerves after their group-stage humbling by Japan. Even a 40-yard own-goal by centre-back Laia Codina could not disturb them as they brushed **Switzerland** aside 5-1. The Swiss had not previously conceded, but this was a reality check ahead of hosting the European Championship in 2025.

La Roja purred, although five changes – including handing Barcelona's reserve keeper Cata Coll a debut (Barca's No.1, Sandra Panos, one of the "rebel 15", was left behind) reflected turmoil was not entirely behind them.

Japan were equally impressive as they dispatched **Norway** 3-1 in Wellington, with Hinata Miyazawa scoring her fifth of the tournament. Why the disappointing Norwegians, with such attacking talent, were so focused on defence is a mystery.

South Africa's tournament came to an unfortunate end, a goalkeeping error by the hitherto excellent Kaylin Swart gifting Lineth Beerensteyn the **Netherlands**' second. Daphne van

Domselaar, thrice denying Thembi Kgatlana, had kept the Dutch ahead after Jill Roord's early goal.

The round of 16 closed with two contrasting matches. **Colombia** versus **Jamaica** was a tight, physical tussle, settled by a moment of quality. Ana Maria Guzman's 51st-minute cross-field ball floated over Deneisha Blackwood's head and was beautifully brought down and converted by *Las Cafeteras* forward Catalina Usme; from an 18-year-old to a 33-year-old, summing up Colombia's mix of youth and experience. It was the only goal Jamaica conceded all tournament, but they also only scored once.

France then made short work of **Morocco**, winning 4-0 with three goals in eight minutes settling the game midway through the first half.

QUARTER-FINALS

Spain moved into their first World Cup semi-final with a 2-1 win over the **Netherlands** in Wellington, settled by Barcelona teenager Salma Paralluelo in extra-time.

With Van Domselaar brilliant again, the 2019 finalists had resisted until the 80th minute when Stefanie van der Gragt, in her final match before retiring, inexplicably handled. Mariona Caldentey tucked away the penalty.

Pushed forward from defence into attack, Van der Gragt redeemed herself with a stoppage-time leveller any striker would be proud of, but Paralluelo's individual goal in the 111th minute ended the Dutch campaign.

Sweden then dominated in-form **Japan** in Auckland to take a 2-0 lead inside an hour. Amanda Ilestedt's fourth goal of the finals was followed by Filippa Angeldahl's penalty, given for an unavoidable handball.

The *Nadeshiko* rallied. After Riko Ueki's 76th-minute penalty hit the bar, Honoka Hayashi halved the deficit in the 87th minute, but an equaliser eluded them and the last remaining winners were out.

A day later, **Australia** and **France** went toe-to-toe in the rugby league cauldron of Brisbane's Lang Park, finishing goalless due to a superb block by Elisa de Almeida from Fowler and good goalkeeping.

A nerve-shredding penalty shootout followed, seconds prior to which *Les Bleues* coach Herve Renard brought on goalkeeper Solene Durand and set-piece specialist Eve Perisset.

Gamble failed... French sub Eve Perisset's penalty is saved by Australia's Mackenzie Arnold

> **Penalty shootouts are compelling, but the tournament had gone five hours without a goal when Caitlin Foord set Sydney's Stadium Australia alight**

The gamble failed. Durand saved just two kicks from ten while Perisset's penalty was touched onto the post by Mackenzie Arnold. The Australia goalkeeper missed her own kick but saved three and, after Vicki Becho hit the post, Cortnee Vine rolled in the 20th penalty of the shootout to put Australia through and spark wild celebrations across the nation.

England and **Colombia** could not match that drama, but served up a tense match that shaped to be a shock when Leicy Santos chipped Mary Earps. But Lauren Hemp levelled in first-half stoppage-time after keeper Catalina Perez spilled a loose ball. Alessia Russo's rifled 63rd-minute strike then put England into their fifth successive tournament semi-final.

SEMI-FINALS

For 81 minutes on another rainy Auckland night, **Spain** and **Sweden** warily cancelled each other out. Then the game exploded. Paralluello tucked away a loose ball only for two more substitutes, Hurtig and Rebecka Blomqvist, to combine in the 88th minute for the latter to neatly level.

Extra-time loomed. But 93 seconds later, Olga Carmona was left unmarked at a corner and scored from 20 yards to fire Spain into their first major final.

A day later in Sydney, **England** produced a composed performance to defeat **Australia** 3-1 and book their own World Cup final spot.

The Lionesses largely controlled the opening period, taking a 36th-minute lead when Ella Toone smashed the ball into the top corner from a tight angle.

The Matildas responded after the break. Soon after the hour, Kerr scored a stunning 25-yarder to send the 75,784-crowd into raptures. But England swiftly silenced them, Hemp seizing on defensive hesitancy to regain the lead before releasing Russo for England's clincher late on.

THIRD PLACE

Sweden won a bittersweet second successive World Cup bronze and fourth in all. Their first goal was a soft penalty, converted by Fridolina Rolfo, but their class was evident in the second, drilled in by Kosovare Asllani. **Australia**, who looked emotionally and physically spent, finished outside of the medals, just as they did at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021.

Dramatic finish... Sweden concede at the death versus Spain

Group by group

GROUP A

The European teams progressed as expected but their passage was far from comfortable, especially for **Norway** who were shocked by an opening-night defeat to **New Zealand**, the co-hosts' first World Cup win at the 16th attempt.

Hannah Wilkinson topped off a superb move to earn the Kiwis victory in front of 42,137 ecstatic supporters at Auckland's rugby citadel Eden Park, igniting a nation that had hitherto failed to embrace the tournament.

That should have set the Football Ferns up to make the knockout stages for the first time, but they were then rocked themselves, by the **Philippines**, with Sarina Bolden's goal giving them a debut World Cup win.

Needing to win their final game New Zealand were unable to threaten **Switzerland**, who topped the group with one win, two goals scored and none conceded. The Philippines also went out, thrashed 6-0 by a Norway team that finally put aside internal tension.

GROUP B

Co-hosts **Australia** survived a rollercoaster ride despite the absence of star player Sam Kerr, who injured a calf on the eve of their opening match. Having squeezed past a resilient **Republic of Ireland** team with a penalty, they were stunned 3-2 by **Nigeria** before regrouping to thrash **Canada** 4-0 and top the group.

Nigeria's qualification at Canada's expense was outwardly a surprise but was trailed in these pages: the Super Falcons' lowly FIFA ranking (40) belied their potential, while the Olympic champions – beset by funding issues, injuries and a paucity of goalscorers – were vulnerable.

It came down to goalkeeper Chiamaka Nnadozie's penalty save from Christine Sinclair in the goalless draw between the teams. The veteran sadly ended her sixth World Cup goalless and subbed at half-time in the final game. Debutants Ireland acquitted themselves well and deserved a first World Cup point against group runners-up Nigeria.

Bowing out... Christine Sinclair against Australia

GROUP C

Group favourites **Japan** and **Spain** wrapped up qualification early, each putting five goals past **Zambia** and defeating **Costa Rica**. Japan then

First World Cup win...Hannah Wilkinson of New Zealand celebrates v Norway

World Cup legend...Brazil forward Marta waves goodbye

tore Spain apart on the counter-attack to win 4-0, topping the group after a match that saw Spain manage just two shots on target from 77 per cent possession and 898 passes.

Zambia's chances of progressing were severely hit prior to the tournament by the withdrawal of Madrid CFF attacking midfielder Grace Chanda through illness, and injury to first-choice goalkeeper Hazel Nali, but they revived to beat Costa Rica 3-1 in the final game, their first-ever World Cup win.

GROUP D

England stuttered in the opening games, needing a twice-taken penalty to beat **Haiti** in Brisbane and edging another 1-0 against **Denmark** after Amalie Vangsgaard hit the woodwork in stoppage-time. Adding to their concern, influential midfield pivot Keira Walsh was carried off with a knee injury.

However, coach Sarina Wiegman switched to a back three and the reshaped Lionesses blew **China** away 6-1 with Lauren James adding to a fine goal against Denmark with two more stunners, plus a trio of assists.

That result sent a disappointing Chinese side home, with Denmark progressing by dint of an 89th-minute winner by Vangsgaard against them. China did beat Haiti, but only via a penalty; the Caribbean side conceded a spot-kick each game, but impressed in every match with their organisation and threat.

GROUP E

Benfica forward Ana Capeta was the width of the post away from creating an upset for the ages, hitting the woodwork in stoppage-time as the **United States** found themselves hanging on for a goalless draw against **Portugal**.

The defending champions survived but, to the despair of TV schedulers both sides of the Atlantic, finished behind the **Netherlands** who had also held the US in a very even 1-1, and beat Portugal 1-0.

The Portuguese left with four points and much to build on but the other debutants, **Vietnam**, had a tough start. Fading as the group went on they conceded three to the US, two to Portugal then seven to the Dutch in the tournament's biggest blow-out.

GROUP F

A sad end for Marta, who had been subbed by the time the final whistle went on **Brazil**'s tournament and her sixth World Cup. Brazil thrashed **Panama** 4-0, with an Ary Borges hat-trick, played well but lost 2-1 to **France**, then failed to beat **Jamaica**.

The Reggae Girlz suffered as many red cards as scored goals, but went through after also holding France (despite star striker Khadija Shaw's dismissal) and edging Panama 1-0.

Injury-hit *Les Bleues* did enough, Wendie Renard's late header against Brazil proving crucial, but were briefly heading out when losing to Panama before winning a bonkers game 6-3.

Stunned... Germany striker Alexandra Popp

Eliminated...Italy star Cristiana Girelli

GROUP G

Sweden began slowly, needing Amanda Ilestedt's 90th-minute header to defeat **South Africa**, but then cruised, Ilestedt adding two more against **Italy** in a 5-0 rout before they saw off **Argentina**.

Behind them was a scrap. Italy edged Argentina with a late Cristiana Girelli goal but *La Albiceleste* then rallied from 2-0 down to hold South Africa. That left *Banyana Banyana* needing to beat Italy.

Trailing to Arianna Caruso's penalty, they went ahead via a freak own goal and Hildah Magaia's well-taken finish. Caruso levelled but, after Girelli missed a sitter, Jermaine Seoposenwe and Magaia set up Thembi Kgatlana. South Africa survived 16 minutes of injury-time to secure their first World Cup win, and first progression to the knockouts.

GROUP H

There was no sign of the trauma to come when **Germany** thrashed **Morocco** 6-0 in Melbourne. But in Sydney they ran into **Colombia**'s Linda Caicedo, fresh from scoring in the 2-0 defeat of **South Korea**.

The Colombian teenager scored a lovely opener before Alex Popp levelled late on. But the South Americans, instead of hanging on for a point, pinched victory through Manuela Vanegas in the 97th minute.

Morocco, meanwhile, had beaten South Korea to gain their first-ever win at the finals, leaving the latter's coach, Colin Bell, bemoaning the "lack of intensity" in the WK League.

However, Englishman Bell lived and worked in Germany for 35 years, and knew exactly how to set his team up against them. Former Tottenham midfielder Cho So-hyun got in behind a flat defence after six minutes, and though Popp scored her fourth goal of the finals Germany could only draw.

That left the door open for Morocco who progressed after Anissa Lahmari's goal beat Colombia.

Glenn Moore

A new era for international women's football

The UEFA Nations League, which kicks off this autumn, could be a game-changer for the women's international game

The tipping point may have been England's 20-0 evisceration of Latvia, a match so pointless that even the winning manager was unhappy. Or maybe it was Belgium's 19-0 butchering of Armenia, Sweden's 15-0 romp in Georgia, or any of the 16 other 2023 Women's World Cup qualifying matches in the European zone that ended with one team scoring double-figures and the opposition zero.

Most likely it was an accumulation, but the upshot is such mismatches, of no real benefit to either team and unhelpful to the sport's image, should now be a rarity as the qualifying process for major tournaments has been overhauled.

Starting with the 2025 Euros it is to be decided via the new Women's UEFA Nations League, which will run along similar lines to the men's version but carry much greater significance. As well as being the qualification vehicle for World Cups and Euros, it will also determine which European teams make the Olympics, starting with Paris 2024. Under the previous format, the two highest European finishers in this year's World Cup would join hosts France in taking part, but this time it will be the two best Nations League teams.

Nadine Kessler, UEFA's head of women's football, said the lopsided matches were "not good for the development of women's football, not for smaller or big associations."

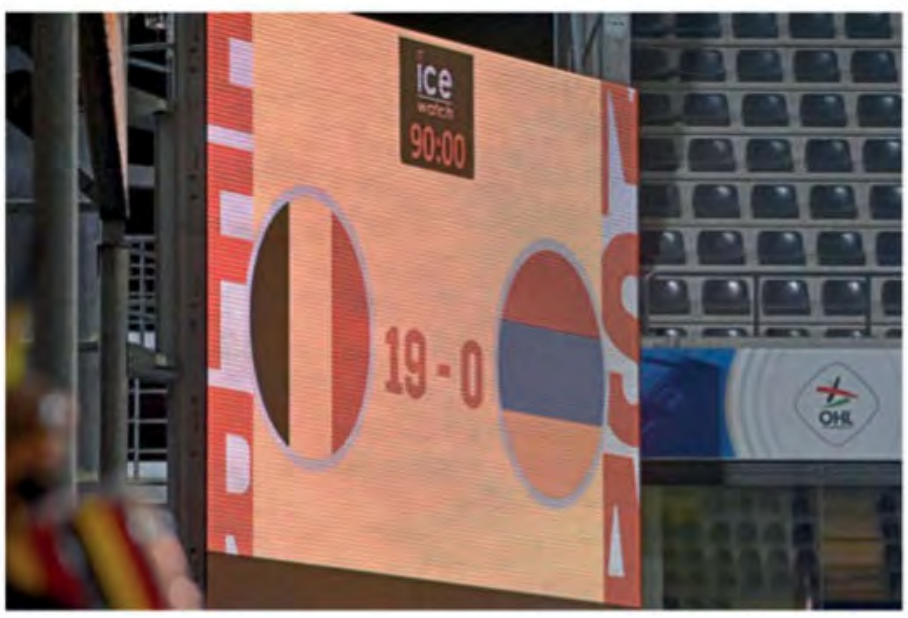
The old format did give part-time players from weaker countries the opportunity to, for example, play on Premier League grounds and against elite players such as Alexia Putellas. But being thrashed is not much fun, and neither are games that effectively become an attack v defence training drill.

"You want competitive games and these are not competitive games," England coach Sarina Wiegman said after the Latvia drubbing. "You want to develop the well-developed countries and the countries that are not that far along. I don't think a 20-0 is good for the development of anyone."

The new format is also more marketable, especially for England who were drawn in a highly attractive and logistically easy group. Whereas their

> "You want competitive games and these are not competitive games...I don't think a 20-0 is good for the development of anyone"
>
> Sarina Wiegman on England's 20-0 thrashing of Latvia in November 2021

New era...such one-sided scorelines should become a thing of the past



Mismatch...former England striker Ellen White hit a hat-trick in the 20-0 win v Latvia

last qualifying section pitted them with Austria, Northern Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg and North Macedonia (winning all ten matches, scoring 80 goals and conceding none) this time they face Scotland, Netherlands and Belgium. A pair of derby matches, England v Scotland and Belgium v Netherlands, launch the group on September 22.

Latvia, meanwhile, now play Malta, Moldova and Andorra which may not be as sellable, but will allow coach Romans Kvacovs to develop attacking patterns of play and hopefully win some matches.

The new competition's format is much like the men's edition, though with only three leagues as four fewer nations (51) entered. League A has four groups of four. The winners go into the Nations League finals (from which two teams will qualify for the Paris Olympics), the fourth-placed team are relegated, and third place enter promotion/relegation play-offs with the second-placed teams in League B, which is also four groups of four. Winners are promoted, bottom nations relegated, and second and third into play-offs to go up or down respectively, with a caveat that the worst performing third team also goes down. That's because League C has four groups of four and one of three, with all five winners going up. The three best-performing runners-up go into the promotion/relegation play-offs.

Simple? Maybe not but it helps that the men's tournament has got fans and media used to the concept and, to an extent, the format.

Promotion and relegation does mean that the weaker nations can earn the right to play the bigger ones. Latvia, for example, should they win promotion, which is feasible, would in Euro 2025 qualifying be playing a team relegated from the first edition's League A such as (on seeding) Scotland, Portugal or Wales (Switzerland, bottom seeds in Group A4, are guaranteed a spot as hosts).

Euro 2025 qualifying also offers a path for teams in League C to qualify.

Teams will be grouped in the same format, based on their positions after the 2023-24 Nations League promotion/relegation play-offs. Hosts Switzerland and the teams subsequently finishing first and second in League A groups qualify automatically.

Third and fourth in League A will play the winners and three best-ranked runners-up in League C in a first play-off round comprising eight matches. A concurrent play-off stream will pit the 12 best-placed League B teams against each other with seedings based on their finishing positions, comprising six matches.

The 14 winners from these ties will meet in a second play-off round to produce the other seven finalists. In addition, there will be automatic promotion/relegation to determine the standings for the 2025-26 Nations League, with all group winners going up.

It all means many more competitive matches, ones which have a meaningful edge, that should be attractive to fans and broadcasters, and ought to help develop players and coaches.

Quite where it leaves events such as England's Arnold Clark Cup, France's Tournoi and the long-established Algarve and Cyprus Cups is unclear, though there does appear to be space for pre-tournaments, such as spring 2025.

But as Kessler says: "If we really truly care about the development of women's football, we cannot build the future of women's football on friendly matches any more."

Player burn-out has been raised as a concern, though the smaller groups and reduction in friendlies should mean no increase in matches. That said, even more so than with the men's Nations League, the fact there is more riding on these games will mean key players are less likely to be rested.

Long-term, however, the move is good for the sport, though, as Kessler underlines, to raise standards across the board it must be matched by investment by national federations in their leagues and player pathways. The hope is the Nations League, with its promotion-relegation structure, provides added incentive.

2023-24 UEFA NATIONS LEAGUE DRAW

GROUP A1
- England
- Netherlands
- Belgium
- Scotland

GROUP A2
- France
- Norway
- Austria
- Portugal

GROUP A3
- Germany
- Denmark
- Iceland
- Wales

GROUP A4
- Sweden
- Spain
- Italy
- Switzerland

GROUP B1
- Republic of Ireland
- Northern Ireland
- Hungary
- Albania

GROUP B2
- Finland
- Romania
- Slovakia
- Croatia

GROUP B3
- Poland
- Serbia
- Ukraine
- Greece

GROUP B4
- Czech Republic
- Slovenia
- Bosnia & Herzegovina
- Belarus

GROUP C1
- Malta
- Moldova
- Latvia
- Andorra

GROUP C2
- Turkey
- Luxembourg
- Lithuania
- Georgia

GROUP C3
- Azerbaijan
- Montenegro
- Cyprus
- Faroe Islands

GROUP C4
- Israel
- Estonia
- Kazakhstan
- Armenia

GROUP C5
- North Macedonia
- Kosovo
- Bulgaria

UEFA managing director of women's football...Nadine Kessler at the Nations League draw

'THE WAR WILL NEVER STOP US'

How Ukraine's women footballers are fighting on

Words: Rich Laverty

Unity...Ukraine's players with their fans after last year's World Cup qualifier against Spain

To say the last 18 months has rocked women's football in Ukraine would be an understatement. While the loss of life and on-going conflict with Russia has been the most tragic aspect since the war began in February last year, the after-effects have seen a devastating impact on society and sport, with many exciting plans for the women's team now up in the air.

After hiring Champions League-winning coach Lluis Cortes after he departed Barcelona, the Ukrainian Association of Football (UAF) had pulled off the ultimate coup and, as a further statement of intent, put forward a bid to host Euro 2025.

But all that was put to one side last year after Cortes, his staff and his players had to flee the country to safety. Cortes has yet to return, living in Spain with his family, while several players found careers elsewhere, though some have now returned to Ukraine since the restart of the domestic league.

Finally, after over six months without a camp, the team reunited in Poland in April before heading to Estonia for a friendly as they look to return to some sort of normal before the UEFA Nations League begins in September, with their European Championship bid hopes long gone.

"Everybody missed each other," says Tetyana Romanenko, who plays for Saint-Etienne in France. "We just wanted to play together and represent our country. Working with Lluis is a great experience, I can see clearly this is the best coach I've had, and we are still excited to move forward.

"We have no money at the moment, we travel everywhere by coach. The girls back in Ukraine, I don't know how they do it. They took the bus to Poland, it was like 24 hours. But just to represent our

country, especially now, is an honour."

Nicole Kozlova, who plays for current Danish champions HB Koge, echoes Romanenko's feelings as they look to show the world they won't be stopped from doing what they love.

"I think all the girls share that feeling," says the midfielder. "We are a close-knit group, we are all friends and the time apart is time away from our friends.

"It is a way of fighting for our country. None of us are on the front line, but we are footballers and when we get the chance to put on our jersey, it means much more right now."

The human aspect of the tragedy and the irreparable damage done to Ukraine can't be hidden. Fortunately, with the help of neighbours Poland and UEFA, Ukraine was able to get their players to safety, with Cortes and his staff taking a crowded 24-hour train across the border in the midst of the initial conflict, before working to get everyone else out and into clubs around Europe.

"It's completely different to anything I've lived before," says Romanenko. "I had all my family there, I've got some of them over here in France. My little nephew was born two weeks after the war started and we decided it would be better for him to have a future here."

Romanenko brought three family members to France, but her dad voluntarily stayed behind to fight the war on the second day.

"The first few weeks were horrible," she admits. "You wake up every day, you can't eat or sleep, just checking the news, sitting next to the TV, trying to get some positive news and it was never positive. For those not in Ukraine, we couldn't control anything, just constant worry and in general just shock as to why it was happening and why do we deserve to have a war on our country?

"I had difficulties concentrating in training. Three days after the war started, I had a game; I think I played on automatic. The first two weeks were super-difficult. After six months you understand it won't stop, maybe not even for years, you live with the reality."

Romanenko admits she wants to go home to see her remaining family and is considering retirement from the sport.

"I would go, just simply to see my dad, because I haven't seen him since January last year."

Kozlova admits it's an "un-real" feeling, and recalls the team were returning home from an international camp in Turkey when the war began.

"My priorities were making sure my team-mates were ok," says the midfielder. "A lot went back to Ukraine, some girls it took days to get out and hear from them. You're just reading the news 24/7, trying to take it in, checking in with everyone you know.

"It was indescribable. I've been home since, but for someone like me living abroad, there's a feeling of guilt in being so far away. I was playing games in Denmark and my team-mates were in bomb shelters, fleeing their homes, it's emotions you've never felt before. We had ten girls who lived in Kharkiv, if not more, and that was heavily hit.

> "If we stop our jobs, our hobbies, our life, it means they took it…I didn't want them to take away what I love"
>
> **Ukraine international Tetyana Romanenko**

One girl we struggled to hear from but thankfully we reached her."

Romanenko says many returned because if they didn't, women's football would be "destroyed" there. But games now sometimes last several hours due to interruptions from air-raid sirens, and are only played at the handful of neutral venues designed with bomb shelters nearby.

When the sirens do sound, players, staff and officials go to the shelters and, when safe, return to the field to warm-up and restart the game. That is their new normal.

Neither Kozlova nor Romanenko know when the old normal will return, or if it ever will.

"I watched a game the other day and they had an air siren during half-time," says Kozlova. "They go in, they come back out and play. That's the strength of Ukrainians: through everything they keep playing, they keep going.

"The biggest negative is how normal it's become. My family is there, that's always in the back of my head, but they have to because life goes on. You get caught in thinking everything's ok now, then you wake up and there's a bomb dropped on your family's city. For a few days, you think about 'what if?' It shouldn't be normal, we don't want it to be; it shouldn't feel as normal as it does right now."

One of their team-mates has a brother on the front line, and the

LEFT and RIGHT: Playing on…Tetyana Romanenko and Nicole Kozlova

stories re-laid bring home the reality of the situation, even 18 months on.

"She was telling me what they see, nothing's getting better. It's great we are playing football, but nothing replaces the war being over and everyone being safe."

Living outside Ukraine, they've had no choice but to get on with things, with football around Europe undisturbed by the on-going conflict.

"A lot of journalists have asked me how difficult it is," says Romanenko. "I said: 'If we stop our jobs, our hobbies, our life, it means they took it'. That's how I played the game after three days of the war. It was horrible and difficult, but I didn't want them to take away what I love."

Kozlova adds: "Football is our job and our livelihood and it's something all Ukrainians share. Back home it's very tough, people are just trying to live the most normal life they can. People are working, shops and restaurants are open. We want to show the same warrior spirit they are on our pitches."

What of the future? With their Euro 2025 bid soon withdrawn and Cortes unable to help develop the sport there in the way he would have wanted, attentions for the national team now turn to the inaugural UEFA Nations League, which will see them face Serbia, Greece and Poland in Group 3 in League B.

With Ukraine out of bounds for national team games, they are working on alternatives, and both games against Greece will take place in Athens, with solutions on remaining games being worked on.

Romanenko doubles down on the fact she is likely to stop playing, but is excited for the team's future.

"I'm preparing to change my life completely, Lluis knows that. A lot of girls have a huge chance and I'm a bit jealous of the chances they'll get to work with Lluis because he's amazing.

"The war will never stop us playing football and Ukraine is only looking forward."

Kozlova also hopes that despite several setbacks, women's football in the country can recover and continue to progress.

"I hope it didn't take as much of a hit as it seems. Lluis and Nadine [Kessler, UEFA's Managing Director of Women's Football], during those early months helped find everyone clubs. Some people found good clubs and actually got better, but not everyone landed in such good situations.

"We had girls who couldn't concentrate on football because of where their families were. The league is back, football is their job and as a society everyone is trying to live their normal lives. Women's football is growing, we're breaking those stereotypes.

"When Ukraine wins the war, I hope our league gets more respect and attention."

Ukraine coach ...Lluis Cortes

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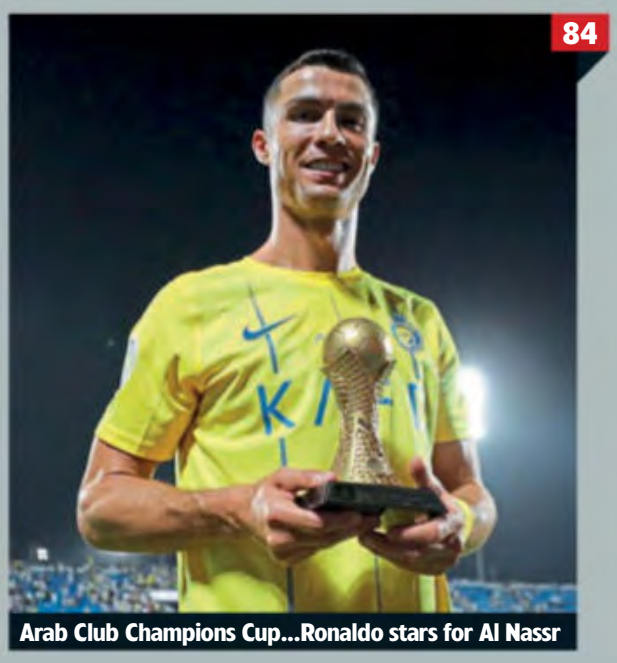

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Arab Club Champions Cup...Ronaldo stars for Al Nassr

South America

TIM VICKERY

World Cup 2026 qualifying begins

Extra places throws qualifying wide open, but next summer's Copa America will disrupt things

Interim boss...Brazil's Fernando Diniz

In recent times all ten South American nations have gone into World Cup qualification campaigns with hopes of making the cut – and that applies all the more now that the expansion of the tournament has awarded the continent six automatic slots plus one more through a play-off. This makes it all but impossible for the traditional powers to miss out, and is likely to turn the middle of the table into a battleground where the outcome will only become clear once the smoke has cleared and the final ball has been kicked in September 2025.

By then, after 18 competitive rounds, all the teams should be battle-hardened; but at this point, they look strangely raw. Usually there is a gap of at least 15 months – and often more – between the end of one World Cup cycle and the start of another, which grants new coaches time to bed in. But this time, the gap is little more than eight months. In practice preparation time has been restricted to the FIFA dates of March and June, meaning that many teams will take the field this September as works in the early stage of progress.

At one extreme are Argentina, where Lionel Scaloni has been in charge for five years. The task now for the reigning world champions is to undergo a gentle period of transition – in the centre-back position, for example – and prepare for the more traumatic possibility of losing Lionel Messi before 2026.

At the other extreme are Brazil. Stand-in coach and current Fluminense boss Fernando Diniz will make his debut in September. Diniz has a CV that is interesting rather than victorious, and has no experience at this level. The idea is that he is keeping the seat warm for Carlo Ancelotti, though there is no official confirmation that the Italian will take over in the middle of next year. And in his presentation, Diniz appeared to place himself more as a rival to Ancelotti than a collaborator in the same process. Interesting times lie ahead.

And this also applies to Uruguay, who have appointed Marcelo Bielsa. As one generation leaves the scene, Bielsa would seem to have the backbone of an interesting side in Ronald Araujo, Federico Valverde and Darwin Nunez. All of this will be unveiled in September, since Bielsa used his debut games in June to look at fringe players.

Bielsa is one of the competition's extraordinary total of seven Argentine coaches – Brazil is one exception, and the others, Ecuador and Peru, are coming off successful spells under the command of an Argentine. Chile boss Eduardo Berizzo is a former Bielsa protégé wrestling for more than a year now with the long-running problem of his adopted country: the lack of outstanding talent to replace the era of Alexis Sanchez and Arturo Vidal. Paraguay's Guillermo Barros Schelotto was in charge for the last six rounds of the 2022 qualifiers – Paraguay's third consecutive failure. The hope now is that the flowering of Miguel Almiron and Julio Enciso in the Premier League will help provide much-needed goals.

Peru have turned to their former captain Juan Reynoso to replace Ricardo Gareca – with little change in personnel, since domestic club football is producing little of interest. Early results have oscillated. Colombia, meanwhile, have made a highly encouraging start under one time assistant Nestor Lorenzo, and look unlikely to

> **The middle of the table will be a battleground where the outcome will only become clear once the smoke has cleared and the final ball has been kicked in September 2025**

Eyes on 2026...Chile and Paraguay both missed out on the 2022 World Cup

repeat their disastrous displays in the Qatar qualifiers.

Ecuador have turned to Felix Sanchez, the Spaniard who was previously with Qatar. He has made a change to a back-three formation, and has an interesting generation of players to work with. His main problem is that Ecuador controversially start with a three-point penalty – a consequence of the doubts over right-back Byron Castillo's documents in the previous campaign. This gives hope to rivals such as Bolivia, who would seem to be in good hands with Gustavo Costas, a coach who may lack glamour but who consistently produces competitive teams. They hope that the extreme altitude of La Paz will help them pick up enough points to get over the line. And Venezuela have shrugged off the surprise loss of Jose Pekerman with an unbeaten four-game start under Fernando Batista, and have their sights set on a World Cup debut in 2026.

New era...Uruguay got off to a winning start under Marcelo Bielsa in June

Six rounds are played this year – with the following six not taking place until the second half of next year. This means that the Copa America in mid-2024 takes on extra importance. It will be a chance to regroup, and a much-needed chance for some of these new coaches to spend time on the training ground. When the story of the 2026 qualifiers is written, next year's Copa will surely be a part of the story.

Africa

MARK GLEESON

All change in CAF World Cup qualifying

A new format will determine Africa's representatives at the 2026 World Cup in North America

The draw... CAF president Patrice Motsepe at July's draw

Africa have dispensed with their three-tier qualifying system and will have only a single stage to determine the continent's automatic qualifiers for the next World Cup in North America, with the first games getting underway in November.

Traditionally, Africa decided its World Cup representatives with a preliminary stage to help eliminate the lesser lights, followed by a group stage and then two-legged play-offs. Now it will be a lot simpler as Africa's representation for the 2026 finals jumps from five in Qatar to nine (possibly ten via the inter-continental play-offs) for the next tournament in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

The draw for the nine groups, from which only the winners will automatically qualify, was conducted in Abidjan in July, with all of the Confederation of African Football's (CAF) 54 members entering.

This includes Eritrea, who have not competed in international football for the last three years after a spate of defections of team members at matches outside of their borders. The country on the horn of Africa has become known as "Africa's North Korea" due to its isolationism, with many fleeing compulsory national service for its youth and a repressive regime.

It is a coup for CAF to have a full house of entrants for the qualifiers, although FIFA members risk losing their subsidies from world football's governing body if they do not enter a requisite number of competitions.

The draw was seeded according to the FIFA rankings, with eight of the top-seeded sides having participated at previous World Cups. Mali is the only exception.

Morocco, after their heroics in Qatar, will head Group E with Zambia their strongest rivals. Avram Grant has

taken over Zambia and ensured qualification for the next Africa Cup of Nations finals, from which the Zambians have been absent for the last editions, but Morocco remain overwhelming favourites.

Reigning African champions Senegal, who have qualified for two successive World Cups, look to have an easy path to a third in a row in Group B where the Democratic Republic of Congo look like their only credible opponent. The Congolese, then known as Zaire, qualified for the 1974 World Cup and have always had plenty of potential but been hamstrung by chaotic administration that remains a massive handbrake on any potential success.

Cameroon's eight previous World Cup finals appearances remains an African record and their win over Brazil in Qatar last November provided a result for them to dine out on for a while to come. At first glance, the pairing of the Indomitable Lions with Angola and the Cape Verde islands in Group D would seem a relatively simple task, but both of those Portuguese-speaking countries have proven a handful for Cameroon in the past, especially the tiny islanders with a few upset results.

Nigeria have arguably the most talented squad, with many players emerging on the European club circuit over the past couple of seasons, and they are in Group C where South Africa are their most likely rival. The group also includes Zimbabwe, who have had their FIFA ban lifted. They spent 17 months out of international competition after government interference in the running of the football association. They were also disqualified from the 2018 World Cup preliminaries because they repeatedly defaulted on FIFA instructions to pay wages to their former Brazilian coach Jose Claudinei Georgini "Valinhos".

The draw also looks relatively comfortable for Algeria, Egypt, the Ivory Coast and especially Tunisia, who beat France in Qatar although did not get past the first round. Their opponents in Group H are Equatorial Guinea, Liberia, Malawi, Namibia and tiny Sao Tome & Principe – hardly a line-up to have them quaking in their boots.

Mali had a great opportunity to go to the 2022 finals but a ridiculous own goal saw them edged out by Tunisia in the play-offs and they will have it tough in Group I, which they share with Ghana.

The qualifiers in Africa begin with two matchdays in November and continue from June next year after January's Cup of Nations finals in the Ivory Coast. They will be completed in October 2025 after each country has played ten games.

The four best group runners-up will be drawn into a knockout play-off to determine a sole African representative for the new-style inter-confederational play-off for a potential extra African place at the finals. Those games are to be played in November 2025.

Now it will be a lot simpler as Africa's representation for the 2026 finals jumps from five in Qatar to nine for the next tournament in the United States, Canada and Mexico

THE DRAW

GROUP A
- Egypt
- Burkina Faso
- Guinea-Bissau
- Sierra Leone
- Ethiopia
- Djibouti

GROUP B
- Senegal
- DR Congo
- Mauritania
- Togo
- Sudan
- South Sudan

GROUP C
- Nigeria
- South Africa
- Benin
- Zimbabwe
- Rwanda
- Lesotho

GROUP D
- Cameroon
- Cape Verde
- Angola
- Libya
- Eswatini
- Mauritius

GROUP E
- Morocco
- Zambia
- Congo
- Tanzania
- Niger
- Eritrea

GROUP F
- Ivory Coast
- Gabon
- Kenya
- Gambia
- Burundi
- Seychelles

GROUP G
- Algeria
- Guinea
- Uganda
- Mozambique
- Botswana
- Somalia

GROUP H
- Tunisia
- Equatorial Guinea
- Namibia
- Malawi
- Liberia
- Sao Tome & Principe

GROUP I
- Mali
- Ghana
- Madagascar
- Central African Republic
- Comoros
- Chad

Landmark result... Cameroon players celebrate beating Brazil in Qatar

Seeded in Pot 1...Mali have never qualified for the World Cup

CONCACAF

JAMES NALTON

Preview

Plenty to play for in 2023-24 Nations League

The re-formatted, third edition of the competition also offers the chance to qualify for next summer's Copa America

The upcoming edition of the CONCACAF Nations League marks the start of a momentous period for football in the region.

The recent Gold Cup, won by Mexico, served as a curtain-raiser for this epoch of American soccer that culminates in the 2026 World Cup hosted by Canada, the United States and Mexico.

Given that there are three CONCACAF qualification places for 2026 and an inter-confederational play-off spot – in addition to automatic qualification for the three hosts – it could be the first time that CONCACAF has as many representatives in a World Cup as CONMEBOL (South America).

While the 2023 Gold Cup and the 2022-23 Nations League were something of a preview and a chance to see where the contenders are ahead of these crucial moments, the 2023-24 Nations League is where it starts to get serious.

There is already something big on the line for the teams in League A, as the latest edition serves as a pathway for six of the best from CONCACAF to qualify for the 2024 Copa America, hosted in the United States and co-organised by the two confederations.

It is a chance for other CONCACAF nations outside the US, Canada and Mexico to make their presence felt as part of this exciting time for the region. Costa Rica join them as the other seeded team in the Nations League, and all four of these League A teams

CONCACAF leaders...Mexico won the Gold Cup in the summer

Point to prove...Gold Cup runners-up Panama will feel hard done by that they were not seeded

will get a bye to the quarter-finals. This is important as these teams will only need to win one game to qualify for the Copa America, as all four Nations League semi-finalists qualify.

The two remaining Copa America 2024 spots will be decided by play-offs between the losing quarter-finalists, not dissimilar to play-offs for the 2016 Copa America Centenario that was also held in the United States.

Unlike the last Copa on North American soil, there is no guaranteed qualification for the hosts, so the United States will need to win their quarter-final in order to qualify for 2024.

The US, Mexico and Canada will be expected to do well in the Nations League and should qualify for the Copa America with ease, but those quarter-finals will have added pressure as they are massive games in the grand scheme of things.

For any to miss out would be a huge blow, but it would also affect their 2026 World Cup preparations. With no qualifying campaign to negotiate, playing against South American opposition in the Copa America will provide high-level, high-profile competitive games. This places extra weight on these Nations League games for all involved. The other teams in League A will see it as a chance to upset the apple cart ahead of the 2026 World Cup.

It is a chance for other CONCACAF nations outside the US, Canada and Mexico to make their presence felt as part of this exciting time for the region

It is a rare opportunity to be present at a Copa America and even though CONCACAF teams have participated in the tournament before, with all the build-up to the World Cup, the furore around Lionel Messi in MLS, and high-profile names representing a number of the central and northern nations, it will be the most CONCACAF of all the Copa Americas.

Mexico will want to use this Nations League to show their Gold Cup win wasn't a one-off that merely took advantage of weakened US and Canada squads. Panama will be looking to prove they should be the other seeded team, not Costa Rica, after impressing in the Gold Cup and reaching the final.

Defending Nations League champions the USA will want to reaffirm that its strongest squad is the best in CONCACAF, and Canada will aim to return to the form that saw them top CONCACAF's 2022 World Cup qualifying table having disappointed since.

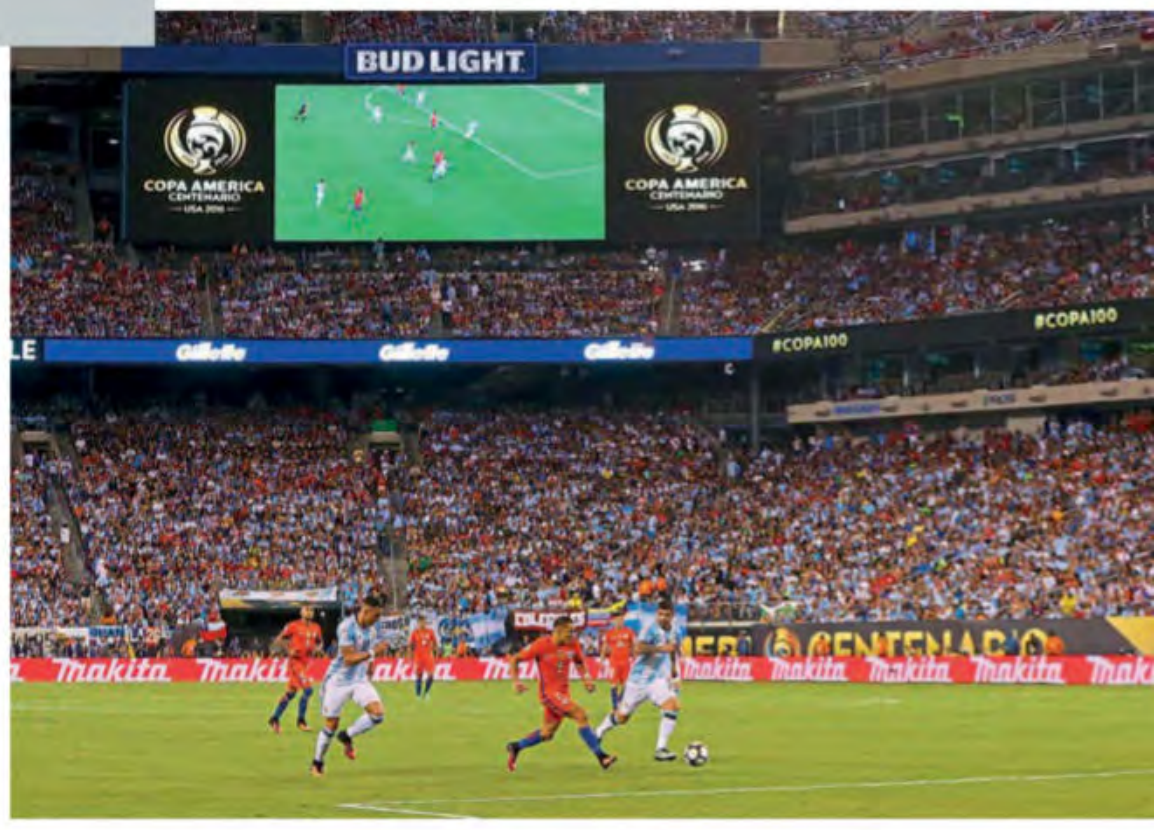
As in UEFA's version of this tournament, the CONCACAF Nations League is a great opportunity for lower-ranked countries to experience more competitive games against teams on a similar level. League C is an intriguing battle between the smaller Caribbean islands, while those in League B will be using it to prepare for the 2026 World Cup qualification campaign, which is due to begin in March 2024.

Teams like Guadeloupe, who performed well in the Gold Cup, earning a draw with Canada, will be targeting promotion to League A where they can regularly mix it with CONCACAF's best.

Though this 2023-24 Nations League campaign has wider implications beyond the tournament itself, especially in League A, long-term planning needs to combine with success in the present. Teams will be looking to show they are not merely works in progress but are already prepared for tests that lie ahead.

Whether that success looks like qualifying for the 2024 Copa America, gaining promotion from Leagues B or C, or winning the Nations League itself, it is a chance for those with ambition to show they are ready to take centre stage in a region that will soon be at the very centre of world football.

For the full draw, see page 92.



Rare opportunity...the Copa America has only been hosted once before outside South America

Asia

JOHN DUERDEN

Saudi clubs dominate Champions League build-up

All eyes are on Saudi Arabia after the summer spending spree, but eastern clubs also remain a force ahead of new-look format

Urawa Red Diamonds of Japan defeated Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal in May's Asian Champions League final but much has changed ahead of September's start of the new edition. To start with, this is the first time since the competition was formed in 2003 that it has switched from a single-year event, which usually starts in February and ends in November, to the European-style schedule that runs from autumn to spring. More significantly, this tournament will get more attention simply because of Saudi Arabia.

After losing the final, Al Hilal (the most successful team in Asia with four Champions League titles) have signed Neymar from PSG, Sergej Milinkovic-Savic from Lazio, Kalidou Koulibaly from Chelsea, Ruben Neves from Wolves, Malcom from Zenit and tried to land

Last year's runners-up... Al Hilal, led by new signing Kalidou Koulibaly

Holders... Urawa Reds won last season's competition

Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappe, the latter in a dramatic single-season loan attempt. And more names continue to be linked, with the Saudi transfer window set to close on Septemer 20. Two-time winners Al Ittihad lifted the domestic title last season and have been joined by Karim Benzema (Real Madrid), N'Golo Kante (Chelsea), Jota (Celtic) and Fabinho (Liverpool). Al Fayha, who qualified through the King's Cup, don't have the same stars but will give an idea of the strength of the lower-ranked teams in Saudi Arabia.

With the likes of Cristiano Ronaldo, Marcelo Brozovic, Seko Fofana, Sadio Mane and others, Al Nassr are perhaps the most star-studded of the Saudi clubs, so the Asian Football Confederation will be delighted they scraped through their qualification play-off in dramatic fashion against UAE's Shabab Al Ahli.

Having such household names playing will give the tournament a huge boost in its first year of the new schedule. The tournament has struggled over the years for profile and popularity across Asia (though it has always been a relatively big deal in Saudi Arabia) and such stars bring the spotlight. The only downside is that it will be focused on just two or three teams and, as the Champions League is split between east and west zones until the final, fans on the other side of the continent will not be able to see the big names.

The Saudi teams were among the favourites in the past, and now it remains to be seen if anyone in the west can stop them advancing to the final. It will be a tall order. Qatari giants Al Sadd and Al Duhail will be among those who are fancied to do so but the latter, coached by Hernan Crespo, were thrashed 7-0 in the 2022 semi-finals by Al Hilal even before the Saudi spending spree.

Iranian clubs are usually competitive as they produce some of the best players in Asia, but financial problems mean that they struggle to keep hold of their talent and are not able to sign foreign players of anything like the same quality as their regional rivals in Riyadh and Jeddah. The UAE have their best hope in Al Ain but that league is not at the same level as it was in the past. Uzbekistan's Pakhtakor have plenty of experience but the Central Asian nation has yet to produce a club capable of going all the way.

> **This tournament will get more attention simply because of Saudi Arabia**

The eastern zone has been in the ascendancy since 2005 with only three wins for the west since then (two for Hilal and one for Al Sadd).

South Korea's Pohang Steelers, Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors and Ulsan Hyundai have seven continental titles between them and the latter two especially, who have been dominant at home in recent years, will have genuine ambitions of going all the way. Japan's Kawasaki Frontale and Yokohama F. Marinos have not yet matched their domestic success in Asia, though Yokohama boss Kevin Muscat can cement his reputation as the next Ange Postecoglou if he can take the team to a first Champions League title. In contrast, Urawa Reds won their third title in last year's tournament despite struggling domestically, and will defend their crown after beating Lee Man of Hong Kong in the play-offs.

Not much is expected of China's representatives given the financial issues in the league in recent years. There will be some interest to see how new champions Wuhan Three Towns, who clinched the title in their first season after promotion, fare and Shandong Taishan have the aerial threat of former Belgium midfielder Marouane Fellaini, one of the few big names still left in the Chinese Super League.

After poor performances in recent years, Australia have just one representative, Melbourne City, to cheer for. Fortunately for the organisers, there is little chance of what would be an awkward all-City Football Group final between Melbourne and Mumbai City, who are over in the western zone. There is a healthy Southeast Asian contingent, but no teams from the region have reached the final since Thailand's BEC-Tero Sasana in 2002-03.

The focus and the pressure, then, will be on Saudi Arabia to see if they have spent wisely. They are the ones to beat.

Two-time winners...Al Ittihad will be led by former Real Madrid striker Karim Benzema

India

JOHN DUERDEN

Indian Super League continues to grow

For the first time, 12 teams will take part in India's top flight

Exciting arrival...Jason Cummings has joined defending champions Mohun Bagan from the A-League

In terms of pure excitement, it will be hard for the new Indian Super League (ISL) season, which kicks off on September 22, to match the last one. The 2022-23 title went down to a penalty shootout, with Mohun Bagan defeating Bengaluru 4-3 to take the trophy back to Kolkata.

That was in March, meaning that the close season is getting shorter. When the ISL started back in 2014, there were just eight teams and it lasted not much more than two months. Then, it served as a standalone tournament, full of big-name, if ageing, stars while the I-League remained the pinnacle of Indian football.

Not anymore. This new campaign is the first that sees a promoted team from the I-League, now the country's second tier, join the ISL, which is now the top tier providing entry to Asia's continental competitions (and, perhaps one day, the FIFA Club World Cup).

The hype has died down – as have average attendances of 26,000 from that first season down to almost 13,000 last season – but now with 12 teams, the ISL is growing.

There will be at least 22 league games for those dozen participants and with the top half entering the end of season play-offs, the ISL is coming close to providing the number of games necessary for professional players especially with the Durand Cup, the third oldest knockout competition in the world.

Last season's top two finishers in the league failed to make it to the Championship final, but those are the breaks. Mumbai City finished first with a margin of four points over Hyderabad, who were eight clear of Mohun Bagan and Bengaluru.

Mumbai, part of the City Football Group stable, still have English coach Des Buckingham in charge. The 2020-21 champions have signed Spanish centre-back Tiri and Dutch midfielder Yoell van Nieff to join India internationals Rahul Bheke, Akash Mishra and Lallianzuala Chhangte. Established as one of the big boys in Indian football, Mumbai will almost certainly finish in the play-offs, it's just a question of how far they go.

> This new campaign is the first that sees a promoted team from the I-League, now the country's second tier, join the ISL

Buckingham is one of four British managers in charge, with five of the remaining eight from Spain including Juan Ferrando at Mohun Bagan.

He will be as excited as the fans about the capture of Jason Cummings, the Scottish-born Australia international who arrives from Central Coast Mariners. The ISL already has a history of importing talent from the A-League who go on to have success in the subcontinent and the striker, second top scorer in Australia

Preview

Mohun Bagan...last season's champions after a game in this season's Durand Cup

last year, should do well. He will line up alongside fellow Aussies Dimitri Petratos and Brendan Hamill and help ensure that the champions have a real chance of a successful defence.

Another English manager, Simon Grayson, came within a penalty shootout of leading Bengaluru to the title and still has veteran striker Sunil Chhetri – the third-highest active international goalscorer in the world behind Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi – to select, although it remains to be seen if the 38-year-old still has the legs for another season.

There will be much interest in Hyderabad. On the back of a strong defence they finished second last season under Manolo Marquez, who departed in June for Goa. Local tactician Thangboi Singto has stepped up and will do the cause of Indian coaches plenty of good if he can lead the Yellow and Blacks to a similar season.

Kerala Blasters ended last season on a low, walking off the pitch in protest after Chhetri scored a quickly-taken free-kick in extra-time of their play-off. The new season is at least a chance to get back on track in one of the country's football hotbeds.

Punjab FC are the first team to be directly promoted from the I-League after comfortably finishing top of the second tier. It will be fascinating to see how they perform and just what kind of gap there is, if any, between the two leagues.

Mumbai City boss ...Des Buckingham

Elsewhere, well-travelled former India boss Stephen Constantine has left East Bengal – who had the painful experience of seeing Kolkata rivals Mohun Bagan bring the trophy to the city – and been replaced by Spaniard Carles Cuadrat. Scott Cooper, a British coach with extensive Asian experience, is now in charge at Jamshedpur, a former club of Owen Coyle with the Scottish boss now in charge of Chennaiyin for the second time.

Goa and Odisha were mid-table last season and both have Spanish hands at their helms in Marquez and Sergio Lobera respectively, as do Northeast United. Juan Pedro Benali can't do much worse than last season: the team, based up in the far corner of the country and bordering Bangladesh, were cut off at the bottom with just five points. This year should be better, and with a top-six finish enough to qualify for the play-offs then anything can happen.

Argentina

JOEL RICHARDS

Review

Demichelis leads River to the title

Ex-Argentina defender guides former club to domestic league crown in his first senior managerial role

"I felt I was ready," beamed Martin Demichelis to the backdrop of a raucous Monumental celebrating River Plate's latest trophy. The *Millonarios* had just cruised to a record 38th league title under their rookie coach.

As promised at his presentation last November, River played with intensity, ambition and spirit under Demichelis. After early stumbles in the league, the *Millonarios* ran away with the title with an attacking style that the club's identity and fanbase demands.

In attack, forwards Ezequiel Barco and Pablo Solari (with eight assists) were abetted by midfielders Nico de la Cruz, Igancio Fernandez and Rodrigo Aliendro. Centre-forward Lucas Beltran hit 12 goals. Beltran had spent loan spells away from the club under Gallardo, but with Demichelis he leapfrogged more senior strikers as first choice.

The *Millonarios* ended the season 11 points ahead of second-placed Talleres de Cordoba after putting together a club-record 15 consecutive home wins in all competitions in 2023.

Late last year Demichelis had been handed the seemingly impossible task of succeeding Marcelo Gallardo, who won 14 trophies in an eight-year golden era for the club. Demichelis was making his debut as first-team coach, leaving his role as youth-team manager at Bayern Munich to return to the club he left 20 years previously to embark on a playing career in Europe that took him to Munich, Malaga and Manchester.

The challenge for Demichelis will now be to replicate Gallardo's success – not just in terms of the amount of silverware but in terms of what type of silverware. Gallardo's era was defined by the Copa Libertadores, winning two titles including the historic 2018 crown against arch-rivals Boca Juniors at the Bernabeu in Madrid. Supporters yearn for more success on the continental stage, yet Argentine clubs are quickly slipping behind as Brazilian clubs dominate the competition – emphasised by River's defeat to Internacional in this season's round of 16. Evidently fans will need to be more patient on that front.

Champions...River players celebrate

Eyes on the prize...Martin Demichelis

The campaign's standout performer...River midfielder Rodrigo Aliendro

Yet in Argentina, with the magnificent Monumental expanding to a thunderous 86,000-capacity and a club's accounts department posting record profit, River are the gold standard.

Their nearest challengers were Talleres de Cordoba. Led by midfielder Rodrigo Garro and the league's joint-top scorer Michael Santos, they recorded the club's best-ever finish in the first division as runners-up.

Next came San Lorenzo, for whom goalkeeper Augusto Batalla marshalled a watertight defence as the Crows conceded just 13 goals in 27 games.

The bloated league format of 28 teams will continue. After the World Cup victory in Qatar, the Argentine Football Association (AFA) and its president Claudio "Chiqui" Tapia has political capital to burn. Yet Argentina's directors insist on an expanded league format that undermines any aspiration to improve the quality of football on show.

The *Millonarios* ended the season 11 points ahead of second-placed Talleres de Cordoba after putting together a club-record 15 consecutive home wins

In another episode of creative administration, the AFA assembly unanimously voted mid-season to change the relegation rules for that very season. Instead of three teams dropping down at the end of the year, it would be just two. The system suits those clubs facing the slightest threat of relegation, and ensures the super-size league will remain.

The final week of the season also delivered miserable reminders of the scale of the problem of football-related violence. There were gunshots and one death at Lanus; there were incidents at numerous clubs across the country; the Velez Sarsfield ultras intimidated players after the final match of a dismal season, with club starlet Gianluca Prestianni among those attacked.

After an interview the following day recounting how he was punched, Prestianni then received death threats. He made it clear he had no intention of staying at a club where the supporters attack their own players, and will move to Benfica when he turns 18. He is one of a number of players who announced moves ahead of the Copa de la Liga, the next competition that – with a format of two 14-team leagues followed by a knockout phase – kicked off on August 20.

Elsewhere, Rosario Central continued to export from their conveyor belt of talent, with 19-year-old striker Alejo Veliz moving to Tottenham Hotspur. Boca Juniors sold midfielder Alan Varela to Porto, while River forward Lucas Beltran joined Fiorentina.

The transfer window, then, was a case of out with the young, in with the old. Boca supporters packed the Bombonera for the presentation of former Uruguay international Edinson Cavani, who won the faithful over without kicking a ball by claiming: "Boca is the biggest club in the world." The 36-year-old represents a real coup for the *Xeneize*, and proves that for all its problems, Argentina's biggest clubs still preserve an allure to South American players.

Across the city, River repatriated its former youth-team graduates Ramiro Funes Mori and Manuel Lanzini. Racing hope to put a poor campaign behind them having brought in talented Boca playmaker Agustin Almendra, along with Colombian duo Roger Martinez and Juan Fernando Quintero.

SEASON'S BEST

COACH OF THE YEAR
Martin Demichelis (River Plate)
Forged a new-look River side that outpaced all other title challengers with exciting, attacking football. Hugely successful debut season for the former international defender.

PLAYER OF THE YEAR
Rodrigo Aliendro (River Plate)
River's low-profile midfield general offered cover for the ageing Enzo Perez and support for attack. Set a club record as the first player to win 19 consecutive home matches.

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR
Gianluca Prestianni
(Velez Sarsfield)
Long hailed as a future star, he was perhaps the only bright point from Velez's poor season. Has secured a move to Benfica having displayed first-class technique, skill and creativity.

United States

JAMES NALTON

Messi shines in Inter Miami bow

Argentine World Cup winner inspires his new team to Leagues Cup trophy, played between MLS and LigaMX clubs

Lionel Messi's introduction to Inter Miami and North American soccer came not in the regular MLS season, but in the third edition of the new-fangled Leagues Cup.

The previous two smaller-scale editions of this tournament, which features teams from US' Major League Soccer and Mexico's LigaMX, may not have registered outside the circles of soccer aficionados, but the third, expanded edition certainly will have – in no small part due to Messi.

It is simply impossible to talk about the 2023 Leagues Cup without mentioning Messi. His presence was bigger than that of the fledgling competition itself. It was his tournament won by his team. He finished as its top scorer and its best player. Most of the audience tuned in for Messi games,

Leagues Cup winners...Messi and his team-mates celebrate with the trophy

Barcelona reunion...Messi's former team-mates in Spain, Sergio Busquets and Jordi Alba, have joined him in Miami

Final hero...Inter Miami goalkeeper Drake Callender made the difference in the shootout

not Leagues Cup games.

Some of the global reportage even mistakenly described the matches in which Messi was involved as MLS. But, though its identity may have been lost amid the Messi hype, the Leagues Cup turned out to be an ideal introduction to American soccer for its biggest-ever star.

At times, it felt like it was set up just for him, but there was more to like about this tournament, even aside from the Messi mania.

It was the first in its expanded, World Cup-style format involving all teams from the two leagues and on the occasions MLS and LigaMX teams faced off, the matches were intriguing – although the same couldn't always be said about the intra-league games, especially in the group stages.

It was heavily weighted towards MLS, though, not least with the number of teams (MLS consists of 29 clubs to LigaMX's 18), plus the fact that it was played entirely in the United States and Canada at the homes of MLS teams, or at a neutral US venue for games between two Mexican clubs. This meant it was a hard slog for the Mexican teams who did progress in the competition. Leon even had to sleep over in Vancouver airport one night on their way to face LA Galaxy, due to travel issues.

Monterrey were the Mexican side who went furthest in the competition, travelling thousands of miles as they progressed to the third-place play-off. By the time of that game, they looked exhausted. Even with a heavily rotated line-up, the miles racked up had sapped their energy and they lost 3-0 to a full-strength Philadelphia Union at the Union's home in Chester, Pennsylvania.

Encouraging performances from MLS teams against their Mexican counterparts have to be taken in the context of this home advantage. With the significant reward of 2024 CONCACAF Champions Cup places for the two finalists and the winner of the third-place game, it was perhaps unfair to Mexican teams. It weighted all-important CONCACAF qualification towards MLS, which will have ten teams in next year's tournament, compared to six from LigaMX.

> **Messi's presence was bigger than that of the fledgling competition itself. It was his tournament won by his team. He finished as its top scorer and its best player**

Nevertheless, MLS teams will be pleased with a showing that indicated improvement when using LigaMX as a bar against which to judge the league's progress, even if winners Inter Miami didn't get many chances to test themselves against LigaMX opposition.

Messi's first game for his new club did come against a Mexican side, Cruz Azul, but it was to be the only game in which Miami faced a LigaMX team. This debut produced a storybook moment as Messi came off the bench in the second half and went on to guide a free-kick into the top corner in the 94th minute to win the game, and his performances in subsequent games continued in much the same vein.

Miami, under new manager Gerardo Martino, faced their biggest tests against FC Dallas in the last 16 and Nashville SC in the final, but on both occasions were able to triumph on penalties.

Unlike Miami, Nashville weren't able to avoid Mexican opposition and had to get past Club America and Monterrey in the knockout stages, having previously faced Toluca in the group phase. They impressed in the final, played at their home stadium, Geodis Park, which showed itself ideal for such an event. There was little to separate the two teams as Messi lit up the game with another wonderful goal before Nashville clawed one back to take it to penalties.

After the game, Messi was officially named the tournament's best player, but the star of the final was Miami goalkeeper Drake Callender. He made several key saves in normal time and in the shootout, scoring a penalty of his own before saving from opposite number Elliot Panicco to win Miami their first-ever trophy.

As Inter Miami lifted the Leagues Cup, they were still technically the worst team in MLS, sitting bottom of the overall standings. But this was now a team transformed. This fresh tournament offered a fresh start for a new-look team now featuring Messi, Sergio Busquets and Jordi Alba, unrecognisable under Martino compared with the team that came before it, when Phil Neville was in charge.

The new World Cup-style Leagues Cup had a World Cup winner lifting the trophy, and perhaps even some recognition of its own as a result.

For all the results, see page 95.

Saudi Arabia

JOHN DUERDEN

Ronaldo wins first Saudi trophy

Portugal superstar leads Al Nassr to victory in Arab Club Champions Cup tournament dominated by Saudi Arabian clubs

Cristiano Ronaldo may or may not lead Al Nassr to glory in Saudi Arabia and in Asia this season, but he played a major part in delivering the club's first trophy since he signed for the Riyadh outfit in December: the King Salman Club Cup. In August, the Yellows defeated bitter local rivals Al Hilal in the final of this 16-team tournament better known as the Arab Club Champions Cup.

If there was any doubt that the big-spending Saudi Arabian clubs are now the ones to beat in the Middle East and North Africa region, it was put to bed here. They dominated: of the four entrants from the Kingdom, three reached the semi-finals, knocking out the fourth along the way.

Off the pitch too, they and their megastar signings were the talk of Abha and Taif, the two host cities in the southwest corner of Saudi Arabia. Never before has this competition received much interest internationally – apart from in these pages, of course – but all over the world, reports were written, live blogs updated and podcasts recorded. For observers new and old, it was an entertaining couple of weeks especially for Saudi Arabian fans though supporters from elsewhere may not have enjoyed it quite so much.

Ronaldo scored in all but one of his six games and his six goals were enough for the Golden Boot. His brace in the final made the difference. With Al Nassr a goal and a man down to their Riyadh neighbours Al Hilal with 15 minutes to go, the 38-year-old, constantly cajoling and roaring on his colleagues, scored once in normal time and then again in extra-time to take the trophy. Even for players who have won major prizes in Europe the celebrations at the end were full of delight, and a first win over Al Hilal since 2021 sets the Yellows up nicely for the Saudi league season.

Standout performer ...Al Hilal's Ruben Neves

Indeed, it was striking that these two giants were going hell for leather for over two hours just 48 hours before they kicked off their domestic league campaign. A number of players were missing for the league openers such as Ronaldo and midfield duo Marcelo Brozovic and Seko Fofana.

> Ronaldo scored in all but one of his six games and his six goals were enough for the Golden Boot

For Al Hilal, Portugal midfielder Ruben Neves stood out but, with the departure of Nigeria striker Odion Ighalo (to Saudi rivals Al Wehda), the team lacked ruthlessness in front of goal – something they hope will be remedied by the €90m arrival of Neymar. Still, there was some consolation for the four-time Asian champions. After a slow start in the group stage, they did knock out Saudi Arabian title-holders Al Ittihad 3-1 in the quarter-finals with Karim Benzema missing a penalty for Ittihad. With new coach Jorge Jesus at the helm, Hilal defeated another Riyadh club Al Shahab by the same scoreline in the semi-finals.

It was not all about the Saudi teams, but it was apparent that these giants from Jeddah and Riyadh, already powerhouses in regional terms, have moved to a different level from the rest of the Arab world. While this is understandable given some of the staggering sums invested, it does mean that proud clubs elsewhere in the region are struggling to compete.

Egypt's Zamalek, Wydad of Morocco and Tunisian team Esperance have all been champions of Africa but failed to

Review

Champions... Ronaldo and his team-mates get their hands on the trophy

progress past the group stage. At the moment, they are just going to have to accept the new reality. The only non-Saudi Arabian team to make the last four were Al Shorta, the Iraqi champions who impressed by dumping out Qatar's Al Sadd in the quarter-finals.

They then met Al Nassr in the semi-final. Given the disparity in budgets and talent at their respective disposals, it was one-way traffic. The Baghdad team only managed a couple of efforts on goal, and it was only a matter of time before the deadlock was broken. Inevitably, it was Ronaldo who got the only goal; at the end, there were opposition players lining up to take selfies with the five-time Ballon d'Or winner.

Semi-final...Al Nassr's Sadio Mane in action against Al Shorta, the only non-Saudi team to make the last four

That did not happen in the final, although the result was the same. Ronaldo, once again, made the difference. Like his team-mates, he danced in front of the fans and paraded with the trophy and if he continues in this form then there could be more silverware to come.

For the time being, however, the other teams in the Arab world may have to get used to winning at home and having to find a way to live with the big Saudi Arabian teams abroad.

Wallis & Futuna

STEVE MENARY

Football revival

After decades in the wilderness, organised football has been revived in Wallis & Futuna

Football revival ...youth football training on the islands

The tiny French-controlled Pacific islands of Wallis & Futuna have a population of less than 15,000, but once had half a dozen clubs playing in a league affiliated to the French Football Federation (FFF) and even made sporadic footballing appearances at the South Pacific Games.

On their Games debut in 1966, Wallis & Futuna lost 5-0 to Tahiti and 9-1 to Papua New Guinea but returning in 1979 recorded their first win by beating Samoa 3-1. Four years later, the French collective beat Samoa 2-1 and thrashed Tonga 3-0. American Samoa were thumped 5-1 at the 1987 Games and Guam were beaten 5-0 four years later but Wallis & Futuna lost all four games in 1995 and never returned.

Enthusiasm on the two island groups – also known as Uvea and Hoorn – shifted to rugby union and volleyball until 2014, when the Association Jeunesse Football Uvea (AJFU) was formed on Wallis just as a young Wallisian was making waves in metropolitan France.

David Faupala represented *Les Bleus* at Under-16, Under-17 and Under-18 level between 2012 and 2014, earning a move to Manchester City in 2016 and scoring on his debut against Chelsea in an FA Cup match but never played again. Faupala's career went into decline with spells in Ukraine, Cyprus and Malta before returning to France. Meanwhile, on the islands of his ancestors, football was being revived.

Flying the flag... David Faupala in action for Manchester City in 2016

The AJFU organised regular sessions until the onset of COVID-19. In June 2022, evening training finally resumed at Stade Kafika on Uvea and football received a major boost late last year, when Anthony and Elodie Bourdon arrived from metropolitan France.

The couple had both previously worked for the FFF in various guises and helped the AJFU regain affiliation with the FFF on January 17. "Now we can benefit from assistance from the French ministry as well as recognition from the federal authority and be able to benefit from the advantages of metropolitan clubs, to be able to welcome metropolitan teams [and] to organise volunteer training," says Elodie Bourdon, who is now AJFU president.

Clubs from other French territories across the globe play in the Coupe de France. That remains a long way off. FFF director of amateur football Sylvain Grimault says: "It is still too early to know the future of football on these islands but the FFF keeps a close eye on this evolution and is content for the moment to give access to clubs to the various possible governmental and federal aid."

> "To organise a league, we need more clubs, which today is not possible"
>
> AJFU president Elodie Bourdon

Activity is increasing. More than 60 players across all age groups take part in weekly sessions at Stade Kafika with adults playing on Monday evenings, two sessions for younger schoolchildren and another for teenagers. The first grass tournament of 2023 was held in July with Shoebox beating Sea Cucumbers 2-0 in the adult final.

A club is also operating on Futuna, which is separated from Uvea by 160 miles (260km) of Pacific Ocean. "To organise a league, we need more clubs, which today is not possible," adds Elodie Bourdon, who in the long term would like a return to the Pacific Games. "Yes, it is a goal," she adds. "But Wallisians should participate more in football because the rule to access the [Games] is to have five years of residence. We are calling on Wallisians to join the club and especially the governance."

SEPTEMBER 1-OCTOBER 1

Global diary

Games and dates to pencil in for the month ahead

Euro 2024 qualifying

As night follows day, the first international break arrives just after the new European season begins. Scotland will aim to continue their 100 per cent record in Group A at home to bottom-placed Cyprus, the Netherlands have ground to make up in Group B ahead of their games with Greece and the Republic of Ireland, while England will travel to the Polish city of Wroclaw for their clash against Ukraine. We'll have reviews of matchdays 5 and 6 in our October issue.

Impressive ...Scotland sit top of Group A

Champions League kick-off

The draw for this season's UEFA Champions League group stage was on August 31 (after this issue went to print), with the competition itself beginning on Tuesday, September 19. This will be the last 32-team group stage of its kind, with next season's edition introducing the so-called "Swiss system" of 36 teams.

Elsewhere, the Europa League and Europa Conference League draws both took place on September 1, with the group stages beginning on Thursday, September 21, while the Asian Champions League begins on September 18.

AFCON qualifiers

Chasing history... Central African Republic

The final round of qualifying matches for the next edition of the Africa Cup of Nations takes place in September. Many of the groups are already decided, with some exceptions. Cameroon need a result against Burundi to advance from Group C, Central African Republic can qualify for the first time in their history if they beat Ghana, all four teams in Group I (DR Congo, Mauritania, Gabon and Sudan) have a chance of going through, while Mozambique and Benin face a straight shootout for qualification from Group L. We will provide a comprehensive round-up of all the action in our next issue.

5 unmissable matches

- **Napoli v Lazio, September 2**
  Last season's top two in Serie A lock horns early in the new campaign. Lazio won 1-0 on their last visit to Naples, with a goal from Matias Vecino.
- **Uruguay v Chile, September 8**
  One of the standout ties from the first round of South American World Cup qualifying sees Uruguay coach Marcelo Bielsa face one of his former players and assistants in the opposite dugout, Chile's Eduardo Berizzo.
- **Scotland v England, September 12**
  The oldest international football rivalry in the world renews again at Hampden Park, as the Auld Enemies meet for a friendly as part of the Scottish Football Association's 150th anniversary.
- **Internazionale v Milan, September 16**
  There may not be many more Milan derbies at the San Siro stadium, with both of the city's clubs planning to move out. Milan go into this one seeking revenge for last season's Champions League defeat.

***Derby della Madonnina*...action from Serie A last season where both sides bagged a victory apiece**

- **Arsenal v Tottenham, September 24**
  The first North London derby of the season promises to be an intriguing battle. For new Spurs boss Ange Postecoglou this is a vital early test, while Arsenal completed a rare double over their arch-rivals last term and are looking to launch another assault on the Premier League title.

Women's Super League

Six weeks after the World Cup final, women's domestic football returns to England on Sunday, October 1. Aston Villa and Manchester United kick things off, before Chelsea begin their title defence with a home game against London rivals Tottenham, while newly-promoted Bristol City take on Leicester City.

Elsewhere, Spain's top flight begins on September 8, with the French, Italian and German leagues kicking off a week later.

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP 2023

ARGENTINA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Vanina **CORREA**	(39) 14.08.83	Rosario Central
12	Lara **ESPONDA**	(17) 08.11.05	River Plate
23	Abigail **CHAVES**	(26) 11.07.97	Huracan

DEFENDERS

2	Adriana **SACHS**	(29) 25.12.93	Santos (Bra)
3	Eliana **STABILE**	(29) 26.11.93	Santos (Bra)
4	Julieta **CRUZ**	(27) 04.06.96	Boca Juniors
6	Aldana **COMETTI**	(27) 03.03.96	Madrid CFF (Spa)
13	Sophia **BRAUN**	(23) 26.01.00	Leon (Mex)
14	Miriam **MAYORGA**	(33) 20.11.89	Boca Juniors
18	Gabriela **CHAVEZ**	(34) 09.04.89	Estudiantes
20	Chiara **SINGARELLA**	(19) 05.12.03	Alabama Crimson Tide (USA)

MIDFIELDERS

5	Vanesa **SANTANA**	(32) 03.09.90	Sporting Huelva (Spa)
7	Romina **NUNEZ**	(29) 01.01.94	UAI Urquiza
8	Daiana **FALFAN**	(22) 14.10.00	UAI Urquiza
10	Dalila **IPPOLITO**	(21) 24.03.02	Parma (Ita)
16	Lorena **BENITEZ**	(24) 03.12.98	Palmeiras (Bra)
17	Camila **GOMEZ ARES**	(28) 26.10.94	U. De Concepcion (Chi)

FORWARDS

9	Paulina **GRAMAGLIA**	(20) 21.03.03	Red Bull Bragantino (Bra)
11	Yamila **RODRIGUEZ**	(25) 24.01.98	Palmeiras (Bra)
15	Florencia **BONSEGUNDO**	(30) 14.07.93	Madrid CFF (Spa)
19	Mariana **LARROQUETTE**	(30) 24.10.92	Leon (Mex)
21	Erica **LONIGRO**	(29) 06.07.94	Rosario Central
22	Estefania **BANINI**	(33) 21.06.90	Atletico Madrid (Spa)

COACH

German **PORTANOVA** (49) 19.10.73

AUSTRALIA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Lydia **WILLIAMS**	(35) 13.05.88	Brighton & Hove Albion (Eng)
12	Teagan **MICAH**	(25) 20.10.97	Rosengard (Swe)
18	Mackenzie **ARNOLD**	(29) 25.02.94	West Ham United (Eng)

DEFENDERS

2	Courtney **NEVIN**	(21) 12.02.02	Leicester City (Eng)
3	Aivi **LUIK**	(38) 18.03.85	Hacken (Swe)
4	Clare **POLKINGHORNE**	(34) 01.02.89	Vittsjo (Swe)
7	Steph **CATLEY**	(29) 26.01.94	Arsenal (Eng)
14	Alanna **KENNEDY**	(28) 21.01.95	Manchester City (Eng)
15	Clare **HUNT**	(24) 12.03.99	Western Sydney Wanderers
21	Ellie **CARPENTER**	(23) 28.04.00	Lyon (Fra)
22	Charlotte **GRANT**	(21) 20.09.01	Vittsjo (Swe)

MIDFIELDERS

6	Clare **WHEELER**	(25) 14.01.98	Everton (Eng)
8	Alex **CHIDIAC**	(24) 15.01.99	Racing Louisville (USA)
10	Emily **VAN EGMOND**	(30) 12.07.93	San Diego Wave (USA)
13	Tameka **YALLOP**	(32) 16.06.91	Brann (Nor)
19	Katrina **GORRY**	(30) 13.08.92	Brisbane Roar
23	Kyra **COONEY-CROSS**	(21) 15.02.02	Hammarby (Swe)

FORWARDS

5	Cortnee **VINE**	(25) 09.04.98	Sydney FC
9	Caitlin **FOORD**	(28) 11.11.94	Arsenal (Eng)
11	Mary **FOWLER**	(20) 14.02.03	Manchester City (Eng)
16	Hayley **RASO**	(28) 05.09.94	Manchester City (Eng)
17	Kyah **SIMON**	(32) 25.06.91	Tottenham Hotspur (Eng)
20	Sam **KERR**	(29) 10.09.93	Chelsea (Eng)

COACH

Tony **GUSTAVSSON** (Swe) (49) 14.08.73

BRAZIL

GOALKEEPERS

1	**BARBARA**	(35) 04.07.88	Flamengo
12	**LETICIA**	(28) 13.08.94	Corinthians
22	**CAMILA**	(22) 02.01.01	Santos

DEFENDERS

2	**ANTONIA**	(29) 26.04.94	Levante (Spa)
3	**KATHELLEN**	(27) 26.04.96	Real Madrid (Spa)
4	**RAFAELLE**	(32) 18.06.91	Arsenal (Eng)
6	**TAMIRES**	(35) 10.10.87	Corinthians
13	**BRUNINHA**	(21) 16.06.02	NJ/NY Gotham (USA)
14	**LAUREN**	(20) 13.09.02	Madrid CFF (Spa)
19	**MONICA**	(36) 21.04.87	Madrid CFF (Spa)

MIDFIELDERS

5	**LUANA**	(30) 02.05.93	Corinthians
8	**ANA VITORIA**	(23) 06.03.00	Benfica (Por)
11	**ADRIANA**	(26) 17.11.96	Orlando Pride (USA)
15	**DUDA**	(22) 18.05.01	Corinthians
17	**ARY BORGES**	(23) 28.12.99	Racing Louisville (USA)
20	**ANGELINA**	(23) 26.01.00	OL Reign (USA)

FORWARDS

7	**ANDRESSA**	(30) 10.11.92	Roma (Ita)
9	**DEBINHA**	(31) 20.11.91	Kansas City Current (USA)
10	**MARTA**	(37) 19.02.86	Orlando Pride (USA)
16	**BIA ZANERATTI**	(29) 17.12.93	Palmeiras
18	**GEYSE**	(25) 27.03.98	Barcelona (Spa)
21	**KEROLIN**	(23) 17.11.99	North Carolina Courage (USA)
23	**GABI NUNES**	(26) 10.03.97	Madrid CFF (Spa)

COACH

Pia **SUNDHAGE** (Swe) (63) 13.02.60

CANADA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Kailen **SHERIDAN**	(28) 16.07.95	San Diego Wave (USA)
18	Sabrina **D'ANGELO**	(30) 11.05.93	Arsenal (Eng)
22	Lysianne **PROULX**	(24) 17.04.99	Torreense (Por)

DEFENDERS

2	Allysha **CHAPMAN**	(34) 25.01.89	Houston Dash (USA)
3	Kadeisha **BUCHANAN**	(27) 05.11.95	Chelsea (Eng)
4	Shelina **ZADORSKY**	(30) 24.10.92	Tottenham Hotspur (Eng)
8	Jayde **RIVIERE**	(22) 22.01.01	Manchester United (Eng)
10	Ashley **LAWRENCE**	(28) 11.06.95	Paris Saint-Germain (Fra)
14	Vanessa **GILLES**	(27) 11.03.96	Lyon (Fra)
16	Gabrielle **CARLE**	(24) 12.10.98	Washington Spirit (USA)

MIDFIELDERS

5	**QUINN**	(27) 11.08.95	OL Reign (USA)
7	Julia **GROSSO**	(22) 29.08.00	Juventus (Ita)
13	Sophie **SCHMIDT**	(35) 28.06.88	Houston Dash (USA)
17	Jessie **FLEMING**	(25) 11.03.98	Chelsea (Eng)
21	Simi **AWUJO**	(19) 23.09.03	USC Trojans (USA)
23	Olivia **SMITH**	(18) 05.08.04	Penn State Nittany Lions (USA)

FORWARDS

6	Deanne **ROSE**	(24) 03.03.99	Reading (Eng)
9	Jordyn **HUITEMA**	(22) 08.05.01	OL Reign (USA)
11	Evelyne **VIENS**	(26) 06.02.97	Kristianstads (Swe)
12	Christine **SINCLAIR**	(40) 12.06.83	Portland Thorns (USA)
15	Nichelle **PRINCE**	(28) 19.02.95	Houston Dash (USA)
19	Adriana **LEON**	(30) 02.10.92	Portland Thorns (USA)
20	Cloe **LACASSE**	(30) 07.07.93	Benfica (Por)

COACH

Bev **PRIESTMAN** (Eng) (37) 29.04.86

CHINA

GOALKEEPERS

1	**ZHU** Yu	(25) 23.07.97	Shanghai Shengli
12	**XU** Huan	(24) 06.03.99	Jiangsu
22	**PAN** Hongyan	(18) 30.12.04	Beijing

DEFENDERS

2	**LI** Mengwen	(28) 28.03.95	Paris Saint-Germain (Fra)
3	**DOU** Jiaxing	(23) 29.02.00	Jiangsu
4	**WANG** Linlin	(22) 04.08.00	Shanghai Shengli
5	**WU** Haiyan	(30) 26.02.93	Wuhan Jianghan University
8	**YAO** Wei	(25) 01.09.97	Wuhan Jianghan University
15	**CHEN** Qiaozhu	(23) 08.09.99	Meizhou Hujjun
23	**GAO** Chen	(30) 11.08.92	Changchun Dazhong Zhuoyue

MIDFIELDERS

6	**ZHANG** Xin	(31) 23.05.92	Shanghai Shengli
9	**SHEN** Mengyu	(21) 19.08.01	Celtic (Sco)
10	**ZHANG** Rui	(34) 17.01.89	Wuhan Jianghan University
13	**YANG** Lina	(29) 13.04.94	Levante Las Planas (Spa)
16	**YAO** Lingwei	(27) 05.12.95	Wuhan Jianghan University
17	**WU** Chengshu	(26) 26.08.96	Canberra United (Aus)
19	**ZHANG** Linyan	(22) 16.01.01	Grasshopper (Sui)
21	**GU** Yasha	(32) 28.11.90	Wuhan Jianghan University

FORWARDS

7	**WANG** Shuang	(28) 23.01.95	Racing Louisville (USA)
11	**WANG** Shanshan	(33) 27.01.90	Wuhan Jianghan University
14	**LOU** Jiahui	(32) 26.05.91	Wuhan Jianghan University
18	**TANG** Jiali	(28) 16.03.95	Shanghai Shengli
20	**XIAO** Yuyi	(27) 10.01.96	Shanghai Shengli

COACH

SHUI Qingxia (56) 18.12.66

COLOMBIA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Catalina **PEREZ**	(28) 08.11.94	Avai (Bra)
12	Sandra **SEPULVEDA**	(35) 03.03.88	Independiente Medellin
13	Natalia **GIRALDO**	(20) 19.05.03	America de Cali

DEFENDERS

2	Manuela **VANEGAS**	(22) 09.11.00	Real Sociedad (Spa)
3	Daniela **ARIAS**	(28) 31.08.94	America de Cali
14	Angela **BARON**	(19) 18.09.03	Atletico Nacional
15	Ana Maria **GUZMAN**	(18) 11.06.05	Deportivo Pereira
17	Carolina **ARIAS**	(32) 02.09.90	Junior
19	Jorelyn **CARABALI**	(26) 18.05.97	Atletico Mineiro (Bra)
20	Monica **RAMOS**	(24) 14.10.98	Gremio (Bra)
22	Daniela **CARACAS**	(26) 25.04.97	Espanyol (Spa)

MIDFIELDERS

4	Diana **OSPINA**	(34) 03.03.89	America de Cali
5	Lorena **BEDOYA**	(25) 06.10.97	Real Brasilia (Bra)
6	Daniela **MONTOYA**	(32) 22.08.90	Atletico Nacional
7	Maria Camila **REYES**	(21) 11.05.02	Santa Fe
8	Marcela **RESTREPO**	(27) 10.11.95	Logrono (Spa)
10	Leicy **SANTOS**	(27) 16.05.96	Atletico Madrid (Spa)
16	Lady **ANDRADE**	(31) 10.01.92	Real Brasilia (Bra)

FORWARDS

9	Mayra **RAMIREZ**	(24) 23.03.99	Levante (Spa)
11	Catalina **USME**	(33) 25.12.89	America de Cali
18	Linda **CAICEDO**	(18) 22.02.05	Real Madrid (Spa)
21	Ivonne **CHACON**	(25) 12.10.97	Valencia (Spa)
23	Elexa **BAHR**	(25) 16.05.98	America de Cali

COACH

Nelson **ABADIA** (67) 05.06.56

COSTA RICA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Genesis **PEREZ**	(18) 04.05.05	UCF Knights (USA)
18	Priscilla **TAPIA**	(32) 02.05.91	Saprissa
23	Daniela **SOLERA**	(25) 21.07.97	Sporting

DEFENDERS

2	Gabriella **GUILLEN**	(31) 01.03.92	Alajuelense
3	Maria **COTO**	(25) 02.03.98	Alajuelense
4	Mariana **BENAVIDES**	(28) 26.12.94	Saprissa
5	Valeria **DEL CAMPO**	(23) 15.02.00	Monterrey (Mex)
6	Carol **SANCHEZ**	(37) 16.04.86	Sporting
12	Maria Paula **ELIZONDO**	(24) 30.11.98	Saprissa
13	Emilie **VALENCIANO**	(26) 15.02.97	Alajuelense
20	Fabiola **VILLALOBOS**	(25) 13.03.98	Alajuelense

MIDFIELDERS

7	Melissa **HERRERA**	(26) 10.10.96	Bordeaux (Fra)
8	Mariela **CAMPOS**	(24) 07.10.98	Saprissa
10	Gloriana **VILLALOBOS**	(23) 20.08.99	Saprissa
11	Raquel **RODRIGUEZ**	(29) 28.10.93	Portland Thorns (USA)
14	Priscila **CHINCHILLA**	(22) 11.07.01	Glasgow City (Sco)
15	Cristin **GRANADOS**	(33) 19.08.89	Sporting
16	Katherine **ALVARADO**	(32) 11.04.91	Saprissa
19	Alexandra **PINELL**	(20) 18.10.02	Alajuelense
21	Sheika **SCOTT**	(16) 22.10.06	Alajuelense

FORWARDS

9	Maria Paula **SALAS**	(21) 12.07.02	Monterrey (Mex)
17	Sofia **VARELA**	(25) 28.03.98	Santos Laguna (Mex)
22	Catalina **ESTRADA**	(24) 11.10.98	Saprissa

COACH

Amelia **VALVERDE** (36) 14.01.87

DENMARK

GOALKEEPERS

1	Lene **CHRISTENSEN**	(23) 04.02.00	Rosenborg (Nor)
16	Kathrine **LARSEN**	(30) 05.05.93	Brondby
22	Maja Bay **OSTERGAARD**	(25) 28.03.98	FC Thy-Thisted Q

DEFENDERS

3	Stine **BALLISAGER PEDERSEN**	(29) 03.01.94	Valerenga (Nor)
4	Rikke **SEVECKE**	(27) 15.06.96	Everton (Eng)
5	Simone **BOYE SORENSEN**	(31) 03.03.92	Hammarby (Swe)
11	Katrine **VEJE**	(32) 19.06.91	Everton (Eng)
18	Luna **GEVITZ**	(29) 03.03.94	Montpellier (Fra)
19	Janni **THOMSEN**	(23) 16.02.00	Valerenga (Nor)
23	Sofie **SVAVA**	(22) 11.08.00	Real Madrid (Spa)

MIDFIELDERS

2	Josefine **HASBO**	(21) 20.11.01	Havard Crimson (USA)
6	Karen **HOLMGAARD**	(24) 28.01.99	Everton (Eng)
7	Sanne **TROELSGAARD**	(34) 15.08.88	Reading (Eng)
8	Emma **SNERLE**	(22) 23.03.01	West Ham United (Eng)
12	Kathrine **KUHL**	(20) 05.07.03	Arsenal (Eng)
13	Sara **THRIGE**	(27) 15.05.96	Milan (Ita)
14	Nicoline **SORENSEN**	(32) 15.08.97	Everton (Eng)
15	Frederikke **THOGERSEN**	(27) 24.07.95	Internazionale (Ita)

FORWARDS

9	Amalie **VANGSGAARD**	(26) 29.11.96	Paris Saint-Germain (Fra)
10	Pernille **HARDER**	(30) 15.11.92	Chelsea (Eng)
17	Rikke **MADSEN**	(25) 09.08.97	North Carolina Courage (USA)
20	Signe **BRUNN**	(25) 06.04.98	Lyon (Fra)
21	Mille **GEJL**	(23) 23.09.99	North Carolina Courage (USA)

COACH

Lars **SONDERGAARD** (64) 05.04.59

ENGLAND

GOALKEEPERS

1	Mary **EARPS**	(30) 07.03.93	Manchester United
13	Hannah **HAMPTON**	(22) 16.11.00	Aston Villa
21	Ellie **ROEBUCK**	(23) 23.09.99	Manchester City

DEFENDERS

2	Lucy **BRONZE**	(31) 28.10.91	Barcelona (Spa)
3	Niamh **CHARLES**	(24) 21.06.99	Chelsea
5	Alex **GREENWOOD**	(29) 07.09.93	Manchester City
6	Millie **BRIGHT**	(29) 21.08.93	Chelsea
14	Lotte **WUBBEN-MOY**	(24) 11.01.99	Arsenal
15	Esme **MORGAN**	(22) 18.10.00	Manchester City
16	Jess **CARTER**	(25) 27.10.97	Chelsea

MIDFIELDERS

4	Keira **WALSH**	(26) 08.04.97	Barcelona (Spa)
8	Georgia **STANWAY**	(24) 03.01.99	Bayern Munich (Ger)
10	Ella **TOONE**	(23) 02.09.99	Manchester United
12	Jordan **NOBBS**	(30) 08.12.92	Aston Villa
17	Laura **COOMBS**	(32) 29.01.91	Manchester City
20	Katie **ZELEM**	(27) 20.01.96	Manchester United

FORWARDS

7	Lauren **JAMES**	(21) 29.09.01	Chelsea
9	Rachel **DALY**	(31) 06.12.91	Aston Villa
11	Lauren **HEMP**	(22) 07.08.00	Manchester City
18	Chloe **KELLY**	(25) 15.01.98	Manchester City
19	Bethany **ENGLAND**	(29) 03.06.94	Tottenham Hotspur
22	Katie **ROBINSON**	(20) 08.08.02	Brighton & Hove Albion
23	Alessia **RUSSO**	(24) 08.02.99	Manchester United

COACH

Sarina **WIEGMAN** (Ned)	(53) 26.10.69	

FRANCE

GOALKEEPERS

1	Solene **DURAND**	(28) 20.11.94	Guingamp
16	Pauline **PEYRAUD-MAGNIN**	(31) 17.03.92	Juventus (Ita)
21	Constance **PICAUD**	(25) 05.07.98	Paris Saint-Germain

DEFENDERS

2	Maelle **LAKRAR**	(23) 27.05.00	Montpellier
3	Wendie **RENARD**	(33) 20.07.90	Lyon
5	Elisa **DE ALMEIDA**	(25) 11.01.98	Paris Saint-Germain
7	Sakina **KARCHAOUI**	(27) 26.01.96	Paris Saint-Germain
13	Selma **BACHA**	(22) 09.11.00	Lyon
14	Aissatou **TOUNKARA**	(28) 16.03.95	Manchester United (Eng)
20	Estelle **CASCARINO**	(26) 05.02.97	Paris Saint-Germain
22	Eve **PERISSET**	(28) 24.12.94	Chelsea (Eng)

MIDFIELDERS

4	Laurina **FAZER**	(19) 13.10.03	Paris Saint-Germain
6	Sandie **TOLETTI**	(28) 13.07.95	Real Madrid (Spa)
8	Grace **GEYORO**	(26) 02.07.97	Paris Saint-Germain
10	Amel **MAJRI**	(30) 25.01.93	Lyon
15	Kenza **DALI**	(31) 31.07.91	Aston Villa (Eng)
17	Lea **LE GARREC**	(30) 09.07.93	Fleury

FORWARDS

9	Eugenie **LE SOMMER**	(34) 18.05.89	Lyon
11	Kadidiatou **DIANI**	(28) 01.04.95	Paris Saint-Germain
12	Clara **MATEO**	(25) 28.11.97	Paris FC
18	Viviane **ASSEYI**	(29) 20.11.93	West Ham United (Eng)
19	Naomie **FELLER**	(21) 06.11.01	Real Madrid (Spa)
23	Vickie **BECHO**	(19) 03.10.03	Lyon

COACH

Herve **RENARD**	(54) 30.09.68	

GERMANY

GOALKEEPERS

1	Merle **FROHMS**	(28) 28.01.95	Wolfsburg
12	Ann-Katrin **BERGER**	(32) 09.10.90	Chelsea (Eng)
21	Stina **JOHANNES**	(23) 23.01.00	Eintracht Frankfurt

DEFENDERS

3	Kathrin **HENDRICH**	(31) 06.04.92	Wolfsburg
4	Sophia **KLEINHERNE**	(23) 12.04.00	Eintracht Frankfurt
5	Marina **HEGERING**	(33) 17.04.90	Bayern Munich
15	Sjoeke **NUSKEN**	(22) 22.01.01	Eintracht Frankfurt
17	Felicitas **RAUCH**	(27) 30.04.96	Wolfsburg
23	Sara **DOORSOUN**	(31) 17.11.91	Eintracht Frankfurt

MIDFIELDERS

2	Chantal **HAGEL**	(25) 20.07.98	Hoffenheim
6	Lena **OBERDORF**	(21) 19.12.01	Wolfsburg
8	Sydney **LOHMANN**	(23) 19.06.00	Bayern Munich
13	Sara **DABRITZ**	(28) 15.02.95	Lyon (Fra)
14	Lena **LATTWEIN**	(23) 02.05.00	Wolfsburg
18	Melanie **LEUPOLZ**	(29) 14.04.94	Chelsea (Eng)
20	Lina **MAGULL**	(28) 15.08.94	Bayern Munich
22	Jule **BRAND**	(20) 16.10.02	Wolfsburg

FORWARDS

7	Lea **SCHULLER**	(25) 12.11.97	Bayern Munich
9	Svenja **HUTH**	(32) 25.01.91	Wolfsburg
10	Laura **FREIGANG**	(25) 01.02.98	Eintracht Frankfurt
11	Alexandra **POPP**	(32) 06.04.91	Wolfsburg
16	Nicole **ANYOMI**	(23) 10.02.00	Eintracht Frankfurt
19	Klara **BUHL**	(22) 07.12.00	Bayern Munich

COACH

Martina **VOSS-TECKLENBURG**	(55) 22.12.67	

HAITI

GOALKEEPERS

1	Kerly **THEUS**	(24) 07.01.99	Miami City (USA)
12	Nahomie **AMBROISE**	(19) 13.11.03	Little Haiti (USA)
23	Lara **LARCO**	(20) 27.11.02	Georgetown Hoyas (USA)

DEFENDERS

2	Chelsea **SURPRIS**	(26) 20.12.96	Grenoble (Fra)
3	Jennyfer **LIMAGE**	(25) 25.12.97	Grenoble (Fra)
4	Tabita **JOSEPH**	(19) 13.09.03	Brest (Fra)
5	Maudeline **MORYL**	(20) 24.01.03	Grenoble (Fra)
13	Betina **PETIT-FRERE**	(19) 01.08.03	Brest (Fra)
14	Esthericove **JOSEPH**	(20) 05.02.03	Exafoot
16	Milan **PIERRE-JEROME**	(21) 23.04.02	George Mason Patriots (USA)
20	Kethna **LOUIS**	(26) 05.08.96	Montpellier (Fra)
21	Ruthny **MATHURIN**	(22) 14.01.01	Louisiana Ragin' Cajuns (USA)

MIDFIELDERS

6	Melchie **DUMORNAY**	(19) 17.08.03	Reims (Fra)
8	Danielle **ETIENNE**	(22) 16.01.01	Fordham Rams (USA)
9	Sherley **JEUDY**	(24) 13.10.98	Grenoble (Fra)
18	Noa **GANTHIER**	(20) 13.10.02	Weston FC (USA)
19	Dayana **PIERRE-LOUIS**	(19) 24.09.03	Issy (Fra)

FORWARDS

7	Batcheba **LOUIS**	(26) 15.06.97	Fleury (Fra)
10	Nerilia **MONDESIR**	(24) 17.01.99	Montpellier (Fra)
11	Roseline **ELOISSAINT**	(24) 20.02.99	Nantes (Fra)
15	Darlina **JOSEPH**	(19) 15.12.03	Grenoble (Fra)
17	Shwendesky **JOSEPH**	(25) 18.11.97	Zenit (Rus)
22	Roselord **BORGELLA**	(30) 01.04.93	Dijon (Fra)

COACH

Nicolas **DELEPINE** (Fra)	(44) 04.05.79	

ITALY

GOALKEEPERS

1	Laura **GIULIANI**	(30) 05.06.93	Milan
12	Rachele **BALDI**	(28) 02.10.94	Fiorentina
22	Francesca **DURANTE**	(26) 12.02.97	Internazionale

DEFENDERS

3	Benedetta **ORSI**	(23) 25.02.00	Sassuolo
4	Lucia **DI GUGLIELMO**	(26) 26.06.97	Roma
5	Elena **LINARI**	(29) 15.04.94	Roma
13	Elisa **BARTOLI**	(32) 07.05.91	Roma
17	Lisa **BOATTIN**	(26) 03.05.97	Juventus
19	Martina **LENZINI**	(24) 23.07.98	Juventus
23	Cecilia **SALVAI**	(29) 02.12.93	Juventus

MIDFIELDERS

2	Emma **SEVERINI**	(20) 18.07.03	Fiorentina
6	Manuela **GIUGLIANO**	(25) 18.08.97	Roma
16	Giulia **DRAGONI**	(16) 07.11.06	Barcelona B (Spa)
18	Arianna **CARUSO**	(23) 06.11.99	Juventus
20	Giada **GREGGI**	(23) 18.02.00	Roma
21	Valentina **CERNOIA**	(32) 22.06.91	Juventus

FORWARDS

7	Sofia **CANTORE**	(23) 30.09.99	Juventus
8	Barbara **BONANSEA**	(32) 13.06.91	Juventus
9	Valentina **GIACINTI**	(29) 02.01.94	Roma
10	Cristiana **GIRELLI**	(33) 23.04.90	Juventus
11	Benedetta **GLIONNA**	(23) 26.07.99	Roma
14	Chiara **BECCARI**	(18) 27.09.04	Como
15	Annamaria **SERTURINI**	(25) 13.05.98	Roma

COACH

Milena **BERTOLINI**	(57) 24.06.66	

JAMAICA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Sydney **SCHNEIDER**	(23) 31.08.99	Sparta Prague (Cze)
13	Rebecca **SPENCER**	(32) 22.02.91	Tottenham Hotspur (Eng)
23	Liya **BROOKS**	(18) 17.05.05	Washington State Cougars (USA)

DEFENDERS

3	Vyan **SAMPSON**	(27) 02.07.96	Hearts (Sco)
4	Chantelle **SWABY**	(24) 06.08.98	Fleury (Fra)
5	Konya **PLUMMER**	(25) 02.08.97	Orlando Pride (USA)
14	Deneisha **BLACKWOOD**	(26) 07.03.97	Issy (Fra)
17	Allyson **SWABY**	(26) 03.10.96	Paris Saint-Germain (Fra)

MIDFIELDERS

2	Solai **WASHINGTON**	(17) 01.10.05	Concorde Fire (USA)
6	Havana **SOLAUN**	(30) 23.02.93	Houston Dash (USA)
7	Peyton **McNAMARA**	(21) 22.02.02	Ohio State Buekeyes (USA)
8	Drew **SPENCE**	(30) 23.10.92	Tottenham Hotspur (Eng)
15	Tiffany **CAMERON**	(31) 16.10.91	Ferencvaros (Hun)
18	Trudi **CARTER**	(28) 18.11.94	Levante Las Planas (Spa)
19	Tiernny **WILTSHIRE**	(25) 08.05.98	Houston Dash (USA)
20	Atlanta **PRIMUS**	(26) 21.04.97	London City Lionesses (Eng)

FORWARDS

9	Kameron **SIMMONDS**	(19) 06.12.03	Tennessee Volunteers (USA)
10	Jody **BROWN**	(21) 16.04.02	Florida State Seminoles (USA)
11	Khadija **SHAW**	(26) 31.01.97	Manchester City (Eng)
12	Kiki **VAN ZANTEN**	(21) 25.08.01	Notre Dame Fighting Irish (USA)
16	Paige **BAILEY-GAYLE**	(21) 12.11.01	Crystal Palace (Eng)
21	Cheyna **MATTHEWS**	(29) 10.11.93	Chicago Red Stars (USA)
22	Kayla **McKENNA**	(26) 03.09.96	Rangers (Sco)

COACH

Lorne **DONALDSON**		

JAPAN

GOALKEEPERS

1	Ayaka **YAMASHITA**	(27) 29.09.95	INAC Kobe Leonessa
18	Momoko **TANAKA**	(23) 17.03.00	Tokyo Verde Beleza
21	Chika **HIRAO**	(26) 31.12.96	Albirex Niigata

DEFENDERS

2	Risa **SHIMIZU**	(27) 15.06.96	West Ham United (Eng)
3	Moeka **MINAMI**	(24) 07.12.98	Roma (Ita)
4	Saki **KUMAGAI**	(32) 17.10.90	Bayern Munich (Ger)
5	Shiori **MIYAKE**	(27) 13.10.95	INAC Kobe Leonessa
12	Hana **TAKAHASHI**	(23) 19.02.00	Urawa Reds
17	Kiko **SEIKE**	(26) 08.08.96	Urawa Reds
19	Miyabi **MORIYA**	(26) 22.08.96	INAC Kobe Leonessa
23	Rion **ISHIKAWA**	(20) 04.07.03	Urawa Reds

MIDFIELDERS

6	Hina **SUGITA**	(26) 31.01.97	Portland Thorns (USA)
7	Hinata **MIYAZAWA**	(23) 28.11.99	MyNavi Sendai
8	Hikaru **NAOMOTO**	(29) 03.03.94	Urawa Reds
10	Fuka **NAGANO**	(24) 09.03.99	Liverpool (Eng)
13	Jun **ENDO**	(23) 24.05.00	Angel City (USA)
14	Yui **HASEGAWA**	(26) 29.01.97	Manchester City (Eng)
15	Aoba **FUJINO**	(19) 27.01.04	Tokyo Verde Beleza
16	Honoka **HAYASHI**	(25) 19.05.98	West Ham United (Eng)

FORWARDS

9	Riko **UEKI**	(23) 30.07.99	Tokyo Verde Beleza
11	Mina **TANAKA**	(29) 28.04.94	INAC Kobe Leonessa
20	Maika **HAMANO**	(19) 09.05.04	Hammarby (Swe)
22	Remina **CHIBA**	(24) 30.04.99	JEF United Chiba

COACH

Futoshi **IKEDA**	(52) 04.10.70	

MOROCCO

GOALKEEPERS

1	Khadija **ER-RMICHI**	(33) 16.09.89	AS FAR
12	Assia **ZOUHAIR**	(32) 29.04.91	CAK
22	Ines **AROUAISSA**	(22) 30.06.01	Cannes (Fra)

DEFENDERS

2	Zineb **REDOUANI**	(23) 12.06.00	AS FAR
3	Nouhalia **BENZINA**	(25) 11.04.98	AS FAR
5	Nesryne **EL CHAD**	(20) 13.03.03	Lille (Fra)
13	Sabah **SEGHIR**	(22) 27.09.00	Napoli (Ita)
14	Rkia **MAZROUAI**	(21) 11.05.02	Charleroi (Bel)
17	Hanane **AIT EL HAJ**	(28) 02.11.94	AS FAR
21	Yasmin **MRABET**	(23) 08.08.99	Levante Las Planas (Spa)

MIDFIELDERS

4	Sarah **KASSI**	(19) 09.09.03	Fleury (Fra)
6	Elodie **NAKKACH**	(28) 20.01.95	Servette (Sui)
8	Salma **AMANI**	(33) 28.11.89	Metz (Fra)
10	Najat **BADRI**	(35) 19.05.88	AS FAR
11	Fatima **TAGNAOUT**	(24) 20.01.99	AS FAR
16	Anissa **LAHMARI**	(26) 17.02.97	Guingamp (Fra)

FORWARDS

7	Ghizlane **CHEBBAK**	(32) 19.02.91	AS FAR
9	Ibtissam **JRAIDI**	(30) 09.12.92	Al Ahli (KSA)
15	Fatima **GHARBI**	(22) 15.05.01	Europa (Spa)
18	Kenza **CHAPELLE**	(20) 22.08.02	Nantes (Fra)
19	Sakina **OUZRAOUI**	(21) 29.08.01	Club YLA (Bel)
20	Sofia **BOUFTINI**	(21) 25.01.02	RS Berkane
23	Rosella **AYANE**	(27) 16.03.96	Tottenham Hotspur (Eng)

COACH

Reynald **PEDROS** (Fra)	(51) 10.10.71	

(Ages as of the tournament kick-off date and clubs as of 2022-23 season)

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP 2023

NETHERLANDS

GOALKEEPERS

1	Daphne **VAN DOMSELAAR**	(23) 06.03.00	Twente
16	Lize **KOP**	(25) 17.03.98	Ajax
23	Jacintha **WEIMAR**	(25) 11.06.98	Feyenoord

DEFENDERS

2	Lynn **WILMS**	(22) 03.10.00	Wolfsburg (Ger)
3	Stefanie **VAN DER GRAGT**	(30) 16.08.92	Internazionale (Ita)
4	Aniek **NOUWEN**	(24) 09.03.99	Milan (Ita)
5	Merel **VAN DONGEN**	(30) 11.02.93	Atletico Madrid (Spa)
15	Caitlin **DIJKSTRA**	(24) 30.01.99	Twente
18	Kerstin **CASPARIJ**	(22) 19.08.00	Manchester City (Eng)
20	Dominique **JANSSEN**	(28) 17.01.95	Wolfsburg (Ger)

MIDFIELDERS

6	Jill **ROORD**	(26) 22.04.97	Wolfsburg (Ger)
8	Sherida **SPITSE**	(33) 29.05.90	Ajax
10	Danielle **VAN DE DONK**	(31) 05.08.91	Lyon (Fra)
12	Jill **BAIJINGS**	(22) 23.02.01	Bayer Leverkusen (Ger)
14	Jackie **GROENEN**	(28) 17.12.94	Paris Saint-Germain (Fra)
17	Victoria **PELOVA**	(24) 03.06.99	Arsenal (Eng)
19	Wieke **KAPTEIN**	(17) 29.08.05	Twente
21	Damaris **EGURROLA**	(23) 26.08.99	Lyon (Fra)

FORWARDS

7	Lineth **BEERENSTEYN**	(26) 11.10.96	Juventus (Ita)
9	Katja **SNOEIJS**	(26) 31.08.96	Everton (Eng)
11	Lieke **MARTENS**	(30) 16.12.92	Paris Saint-Germain (Fra)
13	Renate **JANSEN**	(32) 07.12.90	Twente
22	Esmee **BRUGTS**	(19) 28.07.03	PSV

COACH

Andries **JONKER**	(60) 22.09.62	

NEW ZEALAND

GOALKEEPERS

1	Erin **NAYLER**	(31) 17.04.92	Norrkoping (Swe)
21	Victoria **ESSON**	(32) 06.03.91	Rangers (Sco)
23	Anna **LEAT**	(22) 26.06.01	Aston Villa (Eng)

DEFENDERS

3	Claudia **BUNGE**	(23) 21.09.99	Melbourne Victory (Aus)
4	CJ **BOTT**	(28) 22.04.95	Leicester City (Eng)
5	Michaela **FOSTER**	(24) 09.01.99	Wellington Phoenix
7	Ali **RILEY**	(35) 30.10.87	Angel City (USA)
13	Rebekah **STOTT**	(30) 17.06.93	Brighton & Hove Albion (Eng)
14	Katie **BOWEN**	(29) 15.04.94	Melbourne City (Aus)
19	Elizabeth **ANTON**	(24) 12.12.98	Perth Glory (Aus)

MIDFIELDERS

2	Ria **PERCIVAL**	(33) 07.12.89	Tottenham Hotspur (Eng)
6	Malia **STEINMETZ**	(24) 18.01.99	Western Sydney Wanderers (Aus)
8	Daisy **CLEVERLEY**	(26) 30.04.97	HB Koge (Den)
10	Annalie **LONGO**	(32) 01.07.91	Christchurch United
11	Olivia **CHANCE**	(29) 05.10.93	Celtic (Eng)
12	Betsy **HASSETT**	(32) 04.08.90	Wellington Phoenix
18	Grace **JALE**	(24) 10.04.99	Canberra United (Aus)

FORWARDS

9	Gabi **RENNIE**	(22) 07.07.01	Arizona State Sun Devils (USA)
15	Paige **SATCHELL**	(25) 13.04.98	Wellington Phoenix
16	Jacqui **HAND**	(24) 19.02.99	Aland United (Fin)
17	Hannah **WILKINSON**	(31) 28.05.92	Melbourne City (Aus)
20	Indiah-Paige **RILEY**	(21) 20.12.01	Brisbane Roar (Aus)
22	Milly **CLEGG**	(17) 01.11.05	Wellington Phoenix

COACH

Jitka **KLIMKOVA** (Cze)	(48) 20.08.74	

NIGERIA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Tochukwu **OLUEHI**	(36) 02.05.87	Hakkarigucu Spor (Tur)
16	Chiamaka **NNADOZIE**	(22) 08.12.00	Paris FC (Fra)
23	Yewande **BALOGUN**	(33) 28.09.89	Saint-Etienne (Fra)

DEFENDERS

2	Ashleigh **PLUMPTRE**	(25) 08.05.98	Leicester City (Eng)
3	Osinachi **OHALE**	(31) 21.12.91	Alaves (Spa)
4	Glory **OGBONNA**	(24) 25.12.98	Besiktas (Tur)
5	Onome **EBI**	(40) 08.05.83	Abia Angels
14	Oluwatosin **DEMEHIN**	(21) 13.03.02	Reims (Fra)
20	Rofiat **IMURAN**	(19) 17.06.04	Reims (Fra)
22	Michelle **ALOZIE**	(26) 28.04.97	Houston Dash (USA)

MIDFIELDERS

7	Toni **PAYNE**	(28) 22.04.95	Sevilla (Spa)
10	Christy **UCHEIBE**	(22) 25.12.00	Benfica (Por)
13	Deborah **ABIODUN**	(19) 02.11.03	Rivers Angels
15	Rasheedat **AJIBADE**	(23) 08.12.99	Atletico Madrid (Spa)
18	Halimatu **AYINDE**	(28) 16.05.95	Rosengard (Swe)
19	Jennifer **ECHEGINI**	(22) 22.03.01	Florida State Seminoles (USA)

FORWARDS

6	Ifeoma **ONUMONU**	(29) 25.02.94	NJ/NY Gotham (USA)
8	Asisat **OSHOALA**	(28) 09.10.94	Barcelona (Spa)
9	Desire **OPARANOZIE**	(29) 17.12.93	Wuhan Jianghan University (Chn)
11	Gift **MONDAY**	(21) 09.12.01	Granadilla Tenerife (Spa)
12	Uchenna **KANU**	(26) 20.06.97	Racing Louisville (USA)
17	Francisca **ORDEGA**	(29) 19.10.93	CSKA Moscow (Rus)
21	Esther **OKORONKWO**	(26) 27.03.97	Saint-Etienne (Fra)

COACH

Randy **WALDRUM** (USA)	(66) 25.09.56	

NORWAY

GOALKEEPERS

1	Cecilie **FISKERSTRAND**	(27) 20.03.96	Lillestrom
12	Guro **PETTERSEN**	(31) 22.08.91	Valerenga
23	Aurora **MIKALSEN**	(27) 21.03.96	Brann

DEFENDERS

2	Anja **SONSTEVOLD**	(31) 21.06.92	Internazionale (Ita)
3	Sara **HORTE**	(22) 24.11.00	Rosenborg
4	Tuva **HANSEN**	(25) 04.08.97	Bayern Munich (Ger)
5	Guro **BERGSVAND**	(29) 03.03.94	Brighton & Hove Albion (Eng)
6	Maren **MJEDLE**	(33) 06.11.89	Chelsea (Eng)
16	Mathilde **HARVIKEN**	(21) 29.12.01	Rosenborg
19	Marit **BRATBERG LUND**	(25) 07.11.97	Brann

MIDFIELDERS

7	Ingrid **ENGEN**	(25) 29.04.98	Barcelona (Spa)
8	Vilde **BOE RISA**	(28) 13.07.95	Manchester United (Eng)
11	Guro **REITEN**	(28) 26.07.94	Chelsea (Eng)
13	Thea **BJELDE**	(23) 05.06.00	Valerenga
18	Frida **MAANUM**	(24) 16.07.99	Arsenal (Eng)
20	Emilie **HAAVI**	(31) 16.06.92	Roma (Ita)

FORWARDS

9	Karina **SAEVIK**	(27) 24.03.96	Valerenga
10	Caroline **GRAHAM HANSEN**	(28) 18.02.95	Barcelona (Spa)
14	Ada **HEGERBERG**	(28) 10.07.95	Lyon (Fra)
15	Amalie **EIKELAND**	(27) 26.08.95	Reading (Eng)
17	Julie **BLAKSTAD**	(21) 27.08.01	Hacken (Swe)
21	Anna **JOSENDAL**	(22) 29.04.01	Rosenborg
22	Sophie **ROMAN HAUG**	(24) 04.06.99	Roma (Ita)

COACH

Hege **RIISE**	(53) 18.07.69	

PANAMA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Sasha **FABREGA**	(32) 23.10.92	Independiente La Chorrera
12	Yenith **BAILEY**	(22) 29.03.01	Tauro
22	Farissa **CORDOBA**	(34) 30.06.89	Nanas (Ecu)

DEFENDERS

2	Hilary **JAEN**	(20) 29.08.02	Jones County Bobcats (USA)
3	Wendy **NATIS**	(20) 19.08.02	America de Cali (Col)
4	Katherine **CASTILLO**	(27) 23.03.96	Tauro
5	Yomira **PINZON**	(26) 23.08.96	Saprissa (Crc)
15	Rosario **VARGAS**	(20) 09.08.02	Rayo Vallecano B (Spa)
16	Rebeca **ESPINOSA**	(31) 05.07.92	Sporting San Miguelito
21	Nicole **DE OBALDIA**	(23) 16.03.00	Herediano
23	Carina **BALTRIP-REYES**	(25) 01.07.98	Maritimo (Por)

MIDFIELDERS

6	Deysire **SALAZAR**	(19) 04.05.04	Tauro
7	Emily **CEDENO**	(19) 22.11.03	Tauro
8	Schiandra **GONZALEZ**	(28) 04.07.95	Tauro
10	Marta **COX**	(26) 20.07.97	Pachuca (Mex)
11	Natalia **MILLS**	(30) 22.03.93	Alajuelense (Crc)
14	Carmen **MONTENEGRO**	(22) 05.12.00	Sporting San Miguelito
17	Laurie **BATISTA**	(27) 29.05.96	Tauro
20	Aldrith **QUINTERO**	(21) 01.01.02	Alhama (Spa)

FORWARDS

9	Karla **RILEY**	(25) 18.09.97	Sporting San Jose (Crc)
13	Riley **TANNER**	(23) 15.10.99	Washington Spirit (USA)
18	Erika **HERNANDEZ**	(24) 17.03.99	Plaza Amador
19	Lineth **CEDENO**	(22) 05.12.00	Sporting San Miguelito

COACH

Ignacio **QUINTANA** (Mex)	(36) 23.03.87	

PHILIPPINES

GOALKEEPERS

1	Olivia **McDANIEL**	(25) 14.10.97	So Cal Union (USA)
18	Kaiya **JOTA**	(17) 05.02.06	Los Angeles Breakers (USA)
22	Kiara **FONTANILLA**	(23) 01.07.00	Central Coast Mariners (Aus)

DEFENDERS

2	Malea **CESAR**	(19) 09.12.03	Blacktown City (Aus)
3	Jessika **COWART**	(23) 30.10.99	Kalmar (Swe)
5	Hali **LONG**	(28) 21.01.95	Kaya-Ilolio
13	Angela **BEARD**	(25) 16.08.97	Western United (Aus)
16	Sofia **HARRISON**	(24) 16.02.99	Unattached
17	Alicia **BARKER**	(25) 22.05.98	Pacific Northwest (USA)
19	Dominique **RANDLE**	(28) 10.12.94	Thor/KA (Isl)
23	Reina **BONTA**	(24) 17.04.99	Santos (Bra)

MIDFIELDERS

4	Jaclyn **SAWICKI**	(30) 14.11.92	Western United (Aus)
6	Tahnai **ANNIS**	(34) 20.06.89	Thor/KA (Isl)
8	Sara **EGGESVIK**	(26) 29.04.97	KIL/Hemne (Nor)
11	Anicka **CASTANEDA**	(23) 15.12.99	Mt Druitt Town Rangers (Aus)
12	Ryley **BUGAY**	(27) 23.01.96	Unattached
14	Meryll **SERRANO**	(26) 20.07.97	Stabaek (Nor)
20	Quinley **QUEZADA**	(26) 07.04.97	Red Star Belgrade (Srb)

FORWARDS

7	Sarina **BOLDEN**	(27) 30.06.96	Western Sydney Wanderers (Aus)
9	Isabella **FLANIGAN**	(18) 22.02.05	West Virginia Mountaineers (USA)
10	Chandler **McDANIEL**	(25) 04.02.98	So Cal Union (USA)
15	Carleigh **FRILLES**	(21) 11.04.02	Blacktown Spartans (Aus)
21	Katrina **GUILLOU**	(29) 19.12.93	Pitea (Swe)

COACH

Alen **STAJCIC** (Aus)	(49) 02.11.73	

PORTUGAL

GOALKEEPERS

1	Ines **PEREIRA**	(24) 26.05.99	Servette (Sui)
12	Patricia **MORAIS**	(31) 17.06.92	Braga
22	Rute **COSTA**	(29) 01.06.94	Benfica

DEFENDERS

2	Catarina **AMADO**	(23) 21.07.99	Benfica
3	Lucia **ALVES**	(25) 22.10.97	Benfica
4	Silvia **REBELO**	(34) 20.05.89	Benfica
5	Joana **MARCHAO**	(26) 24.10.96	Parma (Ita)
15	Carole **COSTA**	(33) 03.05.90	Benfica
17	Ana **SEICA**	(22) 25.03.01	Benfica
19	Diana **GOMES**	(24) 26.07.98	Sevilla (Spa)

MIDFIELDERS

6	Andreia **JACINTO**	(21) 08.06.02	Real Sociedad (Spa)
7	Ana **RUTE**	(25) 29.01.98	Braga
8	Andreia **NORTON**	(26) 15.08.96	Benfica
11	Tatiana **PINTO**	(29) 28.03.94	Levante (Spa)
13	Fatima **PINTO**	(27) 16.01.96	Alaves (Spa)
14	Dolores **SILVA**	(31) 07.08.91	Braga

FORWARDS

9	Ana **BORGES**	(33) 15.06.90	Sporting
10	Jessica **SILVA**	(28) 11.12.94	Benfica
16	Diana **SILVA**	(28) 04.06.95	Sporting
18	Carolina **MENDES**	(35) 27.11.87	Braga
20	Kika **NAZARETH**	(20) 17.11.02	Benfica
21	Ana **CAPETA**	(25) 22.12.97	Sporting
23	Telma **ENCARNACAO**	(21) 11.10.01	Maritimo

COACH

Francisco **NETO**	(42) 11.07.81	

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

GOALKEEPERS

1	Courtney **BROSNAN**	(27) 10.11.95	Everton (Eng)
16	Grace **MOLONEY**	(30) 01.03.93	Reading (Eng)
23	Megan **WALSH**	(28) 12.11.94	Brighton & Hove Albion (Eng)

DEFENDERS

2	Claire **O'RIORDAN**	(28) 12.10.94	Celtic (Sco)
3	Chloe **MUSTAKI**	(27) 29.07.95	Bristol City (Eng)
4	Louise **QUINN**	(33) 17.06.93	Birmingham City (Eng)
5	Niamh **FAHEY**	(35) 13.10.87	Liverpool (Eng)
7	Diane **CALDWELL**	(34) 11.09.88	Reading (Eng)
13	Aine **O'GORMAN**	(34) 13.05.89	Shamrock Rovers
22	Isibeal **ATKINSON**	(22) 17.07.01	West Ham United (Eng)

MIDFIELDERS

6	Megan **CONNOLLY**	(26) 07.03.97	Brighton & Hove Albion (Eng)
8	Ruesha **LITTLEJOHN**	(33) 03.07.90	Aston Villa (Eng)
10	Denise **O'SULLIVAN**	(29) 04.02.94	North Carolina Courage (USA)
11	Katie **McCABE**	(27) 21.09.95	Arsenal (Eng)
12	Lily **AGG**	(29) 17.12.93	London City Lionesses (Eng)
15	Lucy **QUINN**	(29) 29.09.93	Birmingham City (Eng)
17	Sinead **FARRELLY**	(33) 16.11.89	NJ/NY Gotham (USA)
21	Ciara **GRANT**	(30) 11.06.93	Hearts (Sco)

FORWARDS

9	Amber **BARRETT**	(27) 16.01.96	Turbine Potsdam (Ger)
14	Heather **PAYNE**	(23) 26.01.00	Florida State Seminoles (USA)
18	Kyra **CARUSA**	(27) 14.11.95	London City Lionesses (Eng)
19	Abbie **LARKIN**	(18) 27.04.05	Shamrock Rovers
20	Marissa **SHEVA**	(26) 22.04.97	Washington Spirit (USA)

COACH

Vera **PAUW** (Ned)	(60) 18.01.63	

SOUTH AFRICA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Kaylin **SWART**	(28) 30.09.94	JVW
16	Andile **DLAMINI**	(30) 02.09.92	Mamelodi Sundowns
21	Kebotseng **MOLETSANE**	(28) 03.03.95	Royal AM

DEFENDERS

2	Lebogang **RAMALEPE**	(31) 03.12.91	Mamelodi Sundowns
3	Bongeka **GAMEDE**	(24) 22.05.99	UWC
4	Noko **MATLOU**	(37) 30.09.85	Eibar (Spa)
5	Fikile **MAGAMA**	(21) 19.01.02	UWC
7	Karabo **DHLAMINI**	(21) 18.09.01	Mamelodi Sundowns
13	Bambanani **MBANE**	(33) 12.03.90	Mamelodi Sundowns
14	Tiisetso **MAKHUBELA**	(26) 24.04.97	Mamelodi Sundowns

MIDFIELDERS

6	Noxolo **CESANE**	(22) 11.10.00	Tigres UANL (Mex)
10	Linda **MOTLHALO**	(25) 01.07.98	Glasgow City (Sco)
15	Refiloe **JANE**	(30) 04.08.92	Sassuolo (Ita)
18	Sibulele **HOLWENI**	(22) 28.04.01	UWC
19	Kholosa **BIYANA**	(28) 06.09.94	UWC
20	Robyn **MOODALY**	(29) 16.06.94	JVW
22	Nomvula **KGOALE**	(27) 20.11.95	TS Galaxy
23	Wendy **SHONGWE**	(20) 18.01.03	University of Pretoria

FORWARDS

8	Hildah **MAGAIA**	(28) 16.12.94	Sejong Sportstoto (Kor)
9	Gabriela **SALGADO**	(25) 20.02.98	JVW
11	Thembi **KGATLANA**	(27) 02.05.96	Racing Louisville (USA)
12	Jermaine **SEOPOSENWE**	(29) 12.10.93	Monterrey (Mex)
17	Melinda **KGADIETE**	(30) 21.07.92	Mamelodi Sundowns

COACH

Desiree **ELLIS**	(60) 14.03.63	

SOUTH KOREA

GOALKEEPERS

1	**YOON** Young-geul	(35) 28.10.87	Hacken (Swe)
18	**KIM** Jung-mi	(38) 16.10.84	Hyundai Steel Red Angels
21	**RYU** Ji-soo	(25) 03.09.97	Seoul WFC

DEFENDERS

2	**CHOO** Hyo-joo	(22) 29.07.00	Suwon FC
3	**HONG** Hye-ji	(26) 25.08.96	Hyundai Steel Red Angels
4	**SHIM** Seo-yeon	(34) 15.04.89	Suwon FC
6	**LIM** Seon-joo	(32) 27.11.90	Hyundai Steel Red Angels
16	**JANG** Sel-gi	(29) 31.05.94	Hyundai Steel Red Angels
17	**LEE** Young-ju	(31) 22.04.92	Madrid CFF (Spa)
20	**KIM** Hye-ri	(33) 05.06.90	Hyundai Steel Red Angels

MIDFIELDERS

5	**KIM** Yun-ji	(34) 01.06.89	Suwon FC
8	**CHO** So-hyun	(35) 24.06.88	Tottenham Hotspur (Eng)
9	**LEE** Geum-min	(29) 07.04.94	Brighton & Hove Albion (Eng)
10	**JI** So-yun	(32) 21.02.91	Suwon FC
14	**JEON** Eun-ha	(30) 28.01.93	Suwon FC
15	**CHUN** Ga-ram	(20) 19.10.02	Hwacheon KSPO
22	**BAE** Ye-bin	(18) 07.12.04	Uiduk University

FORWARDS

7	**SON** Hwa-yeon	(26) 15.03.97	Hyundai Steel Red Angels
11	**CHOE** Yu-ri	(28) 16.09.94	Hyundai Steel Red Angels
12	**MOON** Mi-ra	(31) 28.02.92	Suwon FC
13	**PARK** Eun-sun	(36) 25.12.86	Seoul WFC
19	Casey **PHAIR**	(16) 29.06.07	Players Development Academy (USA)
23	**KANG** Chae-rim	(25) 23.03.98	Hyundai Steel Red Angels

COACH

Colin **BELL** (Eng)	(61) 05.08.61	

SPAIN

GOALKEEPERS

1	Misa **RODRIGUEZ**	(23) 22.07.99	Real Madrid
13	Enith **SALON**	(21) 24.09.01	Valencia
23	Cata **COLL**	(22) 23.04.01	Barcelona

DEFENDERS

2	Ona **BATLLE**	(24) 10.06.99	Manchester United (Eng)
4	Irene **PAREDES**	(32) 04.07.91	Barcelona
5	Ivana **ANDRES**	(29) 13.07.94	Real Madrid
12	Oihane **HERNANDEZ**	(23) 04.05.00	Athletic Bilbao
14	Laia **CODINA**	(23) 22.01.00	Barcelona
19	Olga **CARMONA**	(23) 12.06.00	Real Madrid
20	Rocio **GALVEZ**	(26) 15.04.97	Real Madrid

MIDFIELDERS

3	Teresa **ABELLEIRA**	(23) 09.01.00	Real Madrid
6	Aitana **BONMATI**	(25) 18.01.98	Barcelona
7	Irene **GUERRERO**	(26) 12.12.96	Atletico Madrid
11	Alexia **PUTELLAS**	(29) 04.02.94	Barcelona
16	Maria **PEREZ**	(21) 24.12.01	Barcelona
21	Claudia **ZORNOZA**	(32) 20.10.90	Real Madrid

FORWARDS

8	Mariona **CALDENTEY**	(27) 19.03.96	Barcelona
9	Esther **GONZALEZ**	(30) 08.12.92	Real Madrid
10	Jennifer **HERMOSO**	(33) 09.05.90	Pachuca (Mex)
15	Eva **NAVARRO**	(22) 27.01.01	Atletico Madrid
17	Alba **REDONDO**	(26) 27.08.96	Levante
18	Salma **PARALLUELO**	(19) 13.11.03	Barcelona
22	Athenea **DEL CASTILLO**	(22) 24.10.00	Real Madrid

COACH

Jorge **VILDA**	(42) 07.07.81	

SWEDEN

GOALKEEPERS

1	Zecira **MUSOVIC**	(27) 26.05.96	Chelsea (Eng)
12	Jennifer **FALK**	(30) 26.04.93	Hacken
21	Tove **ENBLOM**	(28) 20.11.94	Orebro

DEFENDERS

2	Jonna **ANDERSSON**	(30) 02.01.93	Hammarby
3	Linda **SEMBRANT**	(36) 15.05.87	Juventus (Ita)
4	Stina **LENNARTSSON**	(21) 04.04.97	Linkoping
5	Anna **SANDBERG**	(20) 23.05.03	Hacken
6	Magdalena **ERIKSSON**	(29) 08.09.93	Chelsea (Eng)
13	Amanda **ILESTEDT**	(30) 17.01.93	Paris Saint-Germain (Fra)
14	Nathalie **BJORN**	(26) 04.05.97	Everton (Eng)

MIDFIELDERS

9	Kosovare **ASLLANI**	(33) 29.07.89	Milan (Ita)
16	Filippa **ANGELDAHL**	(26) 14.07.97	Manchester City (Eng)
17	Caroline **SEGER**	(38) 19.03.85	Rosengard
19	Johanna **RYTTING KANERYD**	(26) 12.02.97	Chelsea (Eng)
20	Hanna **BENNISON**	(20) 16.10.02	Everton (Eng)
22	Olivia **SCHOUGH**	(32) 11.03.91	Rosengard
23	Elin **RUBENSSON**	(30) 11.05.93	Hacken

FORWARDS

7	Madelen **JANOGY**	(27) 12.11.95	Hammarby
8	Lina **HURTIG**	(27) 05.09.95	Arsenal (Eng)
10	Sofia **JAKOBSSON**	(33) 23.04.90	San Diego Wave (USA)
11	Stina **BLACKSTENIUS**	(27) 05.02.96	Arsenal (Eng)
15	Rebecka **BLOMQVIST**	(25) 24.07.97	Wolfsburg (Ger)
18	Fridolina **ROLFO**	(29) 24.11.93	Barcelona (Spa)

COACH

Peter **GERHARDSSON**	(63) 22.08.59	

SWITZERLAND

GOALKEEPERS

1	Gaelle **THALMANN**	(37) 18.01.86	Real Betis (Spa)
12	Livia **PENG**	(21) 14.03.02	Levante (Spa)
21	Seraina **FRIEDLI**	(30) 20.03.93	Zurich

DEFENDERS

2	Julia **STIERLI**	(26) 03.04.97	Zurich
3	Lara **MARTI**	(23) 21.09.99	Bayer Leverkusen (Ger)
4	Laura **FELBER**	(21) 17.08.01	Servette
5	Noelle **MARITZ**	(27) 23.12.95	Arsenal (Eng)
8	Nadine **RIESEN**	(23) 11.04.00	Zurich
15	Luana **BUHLER**	(27) 28.04.96	Hoffenheim (Ger)
18	Viola **CALLIGARIS**	(27) 17.03.96	Levante (Spa)
19	Eseosa **AIGBOGUN**	(30) 23.05.93	Paris FC (Fra)

MIDFIELDERS

6	Geraldine **REUTELER**	(24) 21.04.99	Eintracht Frankfurt (Ger)
7	Amira **ARFAOUI**	(23) 08.08.99	Bayer Leverkusen (Ger)
11	Coumba **SOW**	(28) 27.08.94	Servette
13	Lia **WALTI**	(30) 19.04.93	Arsenal (Eng)
14	Marion **REY**	(24) 21.03.99	Zurich
16	Sandrine **MAURON**	(26) 19.12.96	Servette
17	Seraina **PIUBEL**	(23) 02.06.00	Zurich

FORWARDS

9	Ana Maria **CRNOGORCEVIC**	(32) 03.10.90	Barcelona (Spa)
10	Ramona **BACHMANN**	(32) 25.12.90	Paris Saint-Germain (Fra)
20	Fabienne **HUMM**	(36) 20.12.86	Zurich
22	Meriame **TERCHOUN**	(27) 27.10.95	Dijon (Fra)
23	Alisha **LEHMANN**	(24) 21.01.99	Aston Villa (Eng)

COACH

Inka **GRINGS** (Ger)	(44) 31.10.78	

UNITED STATES

GOALKEEPERS

1	Alyssa **NAEHER**	(35) 20.04.88	Chicago Red Stars
18	Casey **MURPHY**	(27) 25.04.96	North Carolina Courage
21	Aubrey **KINGSBURY**	(31) 20.11.91	Washington Spirit

DEFENDERS

3	Sofia **HUERTA**	(30) 14.12.92	OL Reign
4	Naomi **GIRMA**	(23) 14.06.00	San Diego Wave
5	Kelley **O'HARA**	(34) 04.08.88	NJ/NY Gotham
12	Alana **COOK**	(26) 11.04.97	OL Reign
14	Emily **SONNETT**	(29) 25.11.93	OL Reign
19	Crystal **DUNN**	(31) 03.07.92	Portland Thorns
23	Emily **FOX**	(25) 05.07.98	North Carolina Courage

MIDFIELDERS

2	Ashley **SANCHEZ**	(24) 16.03.99	Washington Spirit
8	Julie **ERTZ**	(31) 06.04.92	Angel City
9	Savannah **DeMELO**	(25) 26.03.98	Racing Louisville
10	Lindsey **HORAN**	(29) 26.05.94	Lyon (Fra)
16	Rose **LAVELLE**	(28) 14.05.95	OL Reign
17	Andi **SULLIVAN**	(27) 20.12.95	Washington Spirit
22	Kristie **MEWIS**	(32) 25.02.91	NJ/NY Gotham

FORWARDS

6	Lynn **WILLIAMS**	(30) 21.05.93	NJ/NY Gotham
7	Alyssa **THOMPSON**	(18) 07.11.04	Angel City
11	Sophia **SMITH**	(22) 10.08.00	Portland Thorns
13	Alex **MORGAN**	(34) 02.07.89	San Diego Wave
15	Megan **RAPINOE**	(38) 05.07.85	OL Reign
20	Trinity **RODMAN**	(21) 20.05.02	Washington Spirit

COACH

Vlatko **ANDONOVSKI**	(46) 14.09.76	

VIETNAM

GOALKEEPERS

1	**DAO** Thi Kieu Oanh	(20) 25.01.03	Hanoi
14	**TRAN** Thi Kim Thanh	(29) 18.09.93	Ho Chi Minh City
20	**KHONG** Thi Hang	(29) 10.10.93	Than Khoang San

DEFENDERS

2	**LUONG** Thi Thu Thuong	(23) 01.05.00	Than Khoang San
3	**CHUONG** Thi Kieu	(27) 19.08.95	Ho Chi Minh City
4	**TRAN** Thi Thu	(32) 15.01.91	Ho Chi Minh City
5	**HOANG** Thi Loan	(28) 06.02.95	Hanoi
6	**TRAN** Thi Thuy Nga	(31) 28.12.91	Thai Nguyen T&T
10	**TRAN** Thi Hai Linh	(22) 08.06.01	Hanoi
13	**LE** Thi Diem My	(29) 06.03.94	Than Khoang San
17	**TRAN** Thi Thu Thao	(30) 15.01.93	Ho Chi Minh City
22	**NGUYEN** Thi My Anh	(28) 27.11.94	Thai Nguyen T&T

MIDFIELDERS

7	**NGUYEN** Thi Tuyet Dung	(29) 13.12.93	Phong Phu Ha Nam
8	**TRAN** Thi Thuy Trang	(34) 08.08.88	Ho Chi Minh City
11	**THAI** Thi Thao	(28) 12.02.95	Hanoi
16	**DUONG** Thi Van	(28) 20.09.94	Than Khoang San
19	**NGUYEN** Thi Thanh Nha	(21) 25.09.01	Hanoi
21	**NGAN** Thi Van Su	(22) 29.04.01	Hanoi
23	**NGUYEN** Thi Bich Thuy	(29) 01.05.94	Ho Chi Minh City

FORWARDS

9	**HUYNH** Nhu	(31) 28.11.91	Lank Vilaverdense (Por)
12	**PHAM** Hai Yen	(28) 09.11.94	Hanoi
15	**NGUYEN** Thi Thuy Hang	(23) 04.03.00	Than Khoang San
18	**VU** Thi Hoa	(19) 06.11.03	Hanoi

COACH

MAI Duc Chung	(72) 21.06.51	

ZAMBIA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Catherine **MUSONDA**	(25) 20.02.98	Tomiris-Turan (Kaz)
16	Leticia **LUNGU**	(18) 07.08.04	ZESCO Ndola Girls
18	Eunice **SAKALA**	(21) 23.05.02	Nkwazi Queens

DEFENDERS

2	Judith **SOKO**	(19) 31.03.04	YASA
3	Lushomo **MWEEMBA**	(22) 10.04.01	Green Buffaloes
5	Mary **MULENGA**	(25) 11.04.98	Red Arrows
8	Margaret **BELEMU**	(26) 24.02.97	Shanghai Shengli (Chn)
13	Martha **TEMBO**	(25) 08.03.98	BIIK Shymkent (Kaz)
15	Agness **MUSESA**	(26) 11.07.97	Green Buffaloes
22	Esther **BANDA**	(18) 21.11.04	BUSA
23	Vast **PHIRI**	(27) 03.02.96	ZESCO Ndola Girls

MIDFIELDERS

4	Susan **BANDA**	(33) 06.07.90	Red Arrows
6	Mary **WILOMBE**	(25) 22.09.97	Red Arrows
10	Comfort **SELEMANI**	(18) 28.11.04	Elite Ladies
12	Evarine **KATONGO**	(20) 29.12.02	ZISD Women
14	Ireen **LUNGU**	(25) 06.10.97	BIIK Shymkent (Kaz)
21	Avell **CHITUNDU**	(25) 30.07.97	ZESCO Ndola Girls

FORWARDS

7	Ochumba **LUBANDJI**	(22) 01.07.01	Red Arrows
9	Hellen **MUBANGA**	(28) 23.05.95	Zaragoza CFF (Spa)
11	Barbra **BANDA**	(23) 20.03.00	Shanghai Shengli (Chn)
17	Racheal **KUNDANANJI**	(23) 03.06.00	Madrid CFF (Spa)
19	Siomala **MAPEPA**	(20) 08.08.02	Elite Ladies
20	Hellen **CHANDA**	(25) 19.06.98	BIIK Shymkent (Kaz)

COACH

Bruce **MWAPE**	(63) 26.10.59	

(Ages as of the tournament kick-off date and clubs as of 2022-23 season)

Internationals

2026 WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

SOUTH AMERICA Section

● *6.5 finals places available*

Matchday 1
Sep 7-8: Argentina v Ecuador; Brazil v Bolivia; Colombia v Venezuela; Paraguay v Peru; Uruguay v Chile

Matchday 2
Sep 12: Bolivia v Argentina; Chile v Colombia; Ecuador v Uruguay; Peru v Brazil; Venezuela v Paraguay

EURO 2024 QUALIFIERS

Group A
Sep 8: Georgia v Spain; Cyprus v Scotland
Sep 12: Norway v Georgia; Spain v Cyprus

Group B
Sep 7: France v Republic of Ireland; Netherlands v Greece
Sep 10: Greece v Gibraltar; Republic of Ireland v Netherlands

Group C
Sep 9: Ukraine v England; N. Macedonia v Italy
Sep 12: Italy v Ukraine; Malta v N. Macedonia

Group D
Sep 8: Croatia v Latvia; Turkey v Armenia
Sep 11: Armenia v Croatia; Latvia v Wales

Group E
Sep 7: Czech Republic v Albania; Poland v Faroe Islands
Sep 10: Faroe Islands v Moldova; Albania v Poland

Group F
Sep 9: Azerbaijan v Belgium; Estonia v Sweden
Sep 12: Belgium v Estonia; Sweden v Austria

Group G
Sep 7: Lithuania v Montenegro; Serbia v Hungary
Sep 10: Montenegro v Bulgaria; Lithuania v Serbia

Group H
Sep 7: Kazakhstan v Finland; Denmark v San Marino; Slovenia v Northern Ireland
Sep 10: Kazakhstan v Northern Ireland; Finland v Denmark; San Marino v Slovenia

Group I
Sep 9: Andorra v Belarus; Kosovo v Switzerland; Romania v Israel
Sep 12: Israel v Belarus; Romania v Kosovo; Switzerland v Andorra

Group J
Sep 8: Bosnia & Herzegovina v Liechtenstein; Luxembourg v Iceland; Slovakia v Portugal
Sep 11: Iceland v Bosnia & Herzegovina; Portugal v Luxembourg; Slovakia v Liechtenstein

AFCON 2023 QUALIFIERS

Group A
Sep 6: Guinea-Bissau v Sierra Leone
Sep 10: Nigeria v Sao Tome & Principe

Group B
Sep 8: Burkina Faso v Eswatini
Sep 10: Togo v Cape Verde

Group C
Sep 12: Cameroon v Burundi

Group D
Sep 8: Egypt v Ethiopia
Sep 9: Malawi v Guinea

Group E
Sep 7: Angola v Madagascar; Ghana v Central African Republic

Group F
Sep 7: Niger v Uganda; Algeria v Tanzania

Group G
Sep 8: Mali v South Sudan
Sep 10: Gambia v Congo

Group H
Sep 9: Comoros v Zambia; Ivory Coast v Lesotho

Group I
Sep 9: Mauritania v Gabon; DR Congo v Sudan

Group J
Sep 6: Libya v Equatorial Guinea
Sep 7: Tunisia v Botswana

Group K
Sep 9: Morocco v Liberia

Group L
Sep 9: Senegal v Rwanda; Mozambique v Benin

2023-24 CONCACAF NATIONS LEAGUE DRAW

League A

Group A
Panama, Guatemala, El Salvador, Martinique, Curacao, Trinidad & Tobago

Group B
Haiti, Jamaica, Honduras, Cuba, Suriname, Grenada

Byes to the Quarter-Finals
Canada, Costa Rica, Mexico, United States

League B

Group A
Guadeloupe, Saint Kitts & Nevis, Saint Lucia, Sint Maarten

Group B
Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Montserrat, Barbados

Group C
French Guiana, Bermuda, Saint Vincent & Grenadines, Belize

Group D
Guyana, Antigua & Barbuda, Puerto Rico, Bahamas

League C

Group A
Bonaire, Saint Martin, Anguilla

Group B
Aruba, Cayman Islands, US Virgin Islands

Group C
Dominica, Turks & Caicos, British Virgin Islands

● *Competition commences September 7*

2023 WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

Group A

Jul 20 – Auckland
New Zealand 1 (Wilkinson 48)
Norway 0

Jul 21 – Dunedin
Philippines 0
Switzerland 2 (Bachmann 45 pen, Piubel 64)

Jul 25 – Wellington
New Zealand 0
Philippines 1 (Bolden 24)

Jul 25 – Hamilton
Switzerland 0
Norway 0

Jul 30 – Dunedin
Switzerland 0
New Zealand 0

Jul 30 – Auckland
Norway 6 (Roman Haug 6, 17, 90+5, Graham Hansen 31, Barker 48 og, Reiten 53 pen)
Philippines 0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Switzerland (Q)	3	1	2	0	2	0	5
Norway (Q)	3	1	1	1	6	1	4
New Zealand	3	1	1	1	1	1	4
Philippines	3	1	0	2	1	8	3

Group B

Jul 20 – Sydney
Australia 1 (Catley 52 pen)
Republic of Ireland 0

Jul 21 – Melbourne
Nigeria 0
Canada 0

Jul 26 – Perth
Canada 2 (Connolly 45+4 og, Leon 53)
Republic of Ireland 1 (McCabe 4)

Jul 27 – Brisbane
Australia 2 (Van Egmond 45+1, Kennedy 90+10)
Nigeria 3 (Kanu 45+6, Ohale 65, Oshoala 72)

Jul 31 – Melbourne
Canada 0
Australia 4 (Raso 9, 39, Fowler 58, Catley 90+4 pen)

Jul 31 – Brisbane
Republic of Ireland 0
Nigeria 0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Australia (Q)	3	2	0	1	7	3	6
Nigeria (Q)	3	1	2	0	3	2	5
Canada	3	1	1	1	2	5	4
Rep of Ireland	3	0	1	2	1	3	1

Group C

Jul 21 – Wellington
Spain 3 (Del Campo 21 og, Bonmati 23, Gonzalez 27)
Costa Rica 0

Jul 22 – Hamilton
Zambia 0
Japan 5 (Miyazawa 43, 62, Mi. Tanaka 55, Endo 71, Ueki 90+11 pen)

Jul 26 – Dunedin
Japan 2 (Naomoto 25, Fujino 27)
Costa Rica 0

Jul 26 – Auckland
Spain 5 (Abelleira 9, Hermoso 13, 70, Redondo 69, 85)
Zambia 0

Jul 31 – Wellington
Japan 4 (Miyazawa 12, 40, Ueki 29, Mi. Tanaka 82)
Spain 0

Jul 31 – Hamilton
Costa Rica 1 (Herrera 47)
Zambia 3 (Mweemba 3, B. Banda 31 pen, Kundananji 90+3)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Japan (Q)	3	3	0	0	11	0	9
Spain (Q)	3	2	0	1	8	4	6
Zambia	3	1	0	2	3	11	3
Costa Rica	3	0	0	3	1	8	0

Group D

Jul 22 – Brisbane
England 1 (Stanway 29 pen)
Haiti 0

Jul 22 – Perth
Denmark 1 (Vangsgaard 90)
China 0

Jul 28 – Sydney
England 1 (James 6)
Denmark 0

Jul 28 – Adelaide
China 1 (Wang Shuang 74 pen)
Haiti 0

Aug 1 – Adelaide
China 1 (Wang Shuang 57 pen)
England 6 (Russo 4, Hemp 26, James 41, 65, Kelly 77, Daly 84)

Aug 1 – Perth
Haiti 0
Denmark 2 (Harder 21 pen, Troelsgaard 90+10)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
England (Q)	3	3	0	0	8	1	9
Denmark (Q)	3	2	0	1	3	1	6
China	3	1	0	2	2	7	3
Haiti	3	0	0	3	0	4	0

Group E

Jul 22 – Auckland
United States 3 (Smith 14, 45+7, Horan 77)
Vietnam 0

Jul 23 – Dunedin
Netherlands 1 (Van der Gragt 13)
Portugal 0

Jul 27 – Wellington
United States 1 (Horan 62)
Netherlands 1 (Roord 17)

Jul 27 – Hamilton
Portugal 2 (Encarnacao 7, Kika 21)
Vietnam 0

Aug 1 – Auckland
Portugal 0
United States 0

Aug 1 – Dunedin
Vietnam 0
Netherlands 7 (Martens 8, Snoeijs 11, Brugts 18, 57, Roord 23, 83, Van de Donk 45)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Netherlands (Q)	3	2	1	0	9	1	7
USA (Q)	3	1	2	0	4	1	5
Portugal	3	1	1	1	2	1	4
Vietnam	3	0	0	3	0	12	0

Group F

Jul 23 – Sydney
France 0
Jamaica 0

Jul 24– Adelaide
Brazil 4 (Ary Borges 19, 39, 70, Bia Zaneratto 48)
Panama 0

Jul 29 – Brisbane
France 2 (Le Sommer 17, Renard 83)
Brazil 1 (Debinha 58)

Jul 29 – Perth
Panama 0
Jamaica 1 (A. Swaby 56)

Aug 2 – Sydney
Panama 3 (Cox 2, Pinzon 64 pen, L. Cedeno 87)
France 6 (Lakrar 21, Diani 28, 37 pen, 52 pen, Le Garrec 45+5, Becho 90+10)

Aug 2 – Melbourne
Jamaica 0
Brazil 0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
France (Q)	3	2	1	0	8	4	7
Jamaica (Q)	3	1	2	0	1	0	5
Brazil	3	1	1	1	5	2	4
Panama	3	0	0	3	3	11	0

Group G

Jul 23 – Wellington
Sweden 2 (Rolfo 65, Ilestedt 90)
South Africa 1 (Magaia 48)

Jul 24 – Auckland
Italy 1 (Girelli 87)
Argentina 0

Jul 28 – Dunedin
Argentina 2 (Braun 74, Nunez 79)
South Africa 2 (Motlhalo 30, Kgatlana 66)

Jul 29 – Wellington
Sweden 5 (Ilestedt 39, 50, Rolfo 44, Blackstenius 45+1, Blomqvist 90+5)
Italy 0

Aug 2 – Hamilton
Argentina 0
Sweden 2 (Blomqvist 66, Rubensson 90 pen)

Aug 2 – Wellington
South Africa 3 (Orsi 32 og, Magaia 67, Kgatlana 90+2)
Italy 2 (Caruso 11 pen, 74)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sweden (Q)	3	3	0	0	9	1	9
South Africa (Q)	3	1	1	1	6	6	4
Italy	3	1	0	2	3	8	3
Argentina	3	0	1	2	2	5	1

Group H

Jul 24 – Melbourne
Germany 6 (Popp 11, 39, Buhl 46, Ait El Haj 54 og, Redouani 79 og, Schuller 90)
Morocco 0

Jul 25 – Sydney
Colombia 2 (Usme 30 pen, Caicedo 39)
South Korea 0

Jul 30 – Adelaide
South Korea 0
Morocco 1 (Jraidi 6)

Jul 30 – Sydney
Germany 1 (Popp 89)
Colombia 2 (Caicedo 52, Vanegas 90+7)

Aug 3 – Brisbane
South Korea 1 (Cho So-hyun 6)
Germany 1 (Popp 42)

Aug 3 – Perth
Morocco 1 (Lahmari 45+4)
Colombia 0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Colombia (Q)	3	2	0	1	4	2	6
Morocco (Q)	3	2	0	1	2	6	6
Germany	3	1	1	1	8	3	4
South Korea	3	0	1	2	1	4	1

Last 16

Aug 5 – Auckland
Switzerland 1 (Codina 11 og)
Spain 5 (Bonmati 5, 36, Redondo 17, Codina 45, Hermoso 70)

Aug 5 – Wellington
Japan 3 (Engen 15 og, Shimizu 50, Miyazawa 81)
Norway 1 (Reiten 20)

Aug 6 – Sydney
Netherlands 2 (Roord 9, Beerensteyn 68)
South Africa 0

Aug 6 – Melbourne
Sweden 0
United States 0
AET. Sweden win 5-4 on penalties

Aug 7 – Brisbane
England 0
Nigeria 0
AET. England win 4-2 on penalties

Aug 7 – Sydney
Australia 2 (Foord 29, Raso 70)
Denmark 0

Aug 8 – Melbourne
Colombia 1 (Usme 51)
Jamaica 0

Aug 8 – Adelaide
France 4 (Diani 15, Dali 20, Le Sommer 23, 70)
Morocco 0

Quarter-Finals

Aug 11 – Wellington
Spain 2 (Caldentey 81 pen, Paralluelo 111)
Netherlands 1 (Van der Gragt 90+1)

Aug 11 – Auckland
Japan 1 (Hayashi 87)
Sweden 2 (Ilestedt 32, Angeldahl 51 pen)

Aug 12 – Brisbane
Australia 0
France 0
Australia win 7-6 on penalties

Aug 12 – Sydney
England 2 (Hemp 45+6, Russo 63)
Colombia 1 (Santos 44)

Semi-Finals

Aug 15 – Auckland
Spain 2 (Paralluelo 81, Carmona 89)
Sweden 1 (Blomqvist 88)

Aug 16 – Syndey
Australia 1 (Kerr 63)
England 3 (Toone 36, Hemp 71, Russo 86)

Third Place Play-Off

Aug 19 – Brisbane
Sweden 2 (Rolfo 30 pen, Asllani 62)
Australia 0

Final

Aug 20 – Sydney
Spain 1 (Carmona 29)
England 0
Spain: Coll – Batlle, Paredes, Codina (Andres 73), Carmona; Bonmati, Abelleira, Hermoso; Redondo (Hernandez 60), Paralluelo, Caldentey (Putellas 90).
England: Earps – Carter, Bright, Greenwood; Bronze, Stanway, Walsh, Daly (Kelly 46); Toone (England 87); Russo (James 46), Hemp.

Club Football

EUROPE

2023 UEFA SUPER CUP

Aug 16 – Piraeus
Manchester City (Eng) 1 (Palmer 63)
Sevilla (Spa) 1 (En-Nesyri 25)
Manchester City win 5-4 on penalties
Manchester City: Ederson – Walker, Akanji, Ake, Gvardiol; Foden, Rodri, Kovacic; Palmer (Alvarez 85), Haaland, Grealish.
Sevilla: Bono – Navas (Montiel 83), Bade Gudelj, Acuna; Jordan, Rakitic; Ocampos, Torres (Juanlu 74), Lamela (Suso 90+3); En-Nesyri (Mir 90+3).

2023 FA COMMUNITY SHIELD

Aug 6 – Wembley
Arsenal 1 (Trossard 90+11)
Manchester City 1 (Palmer 77)
Arsenal win 4-1 on penalties

2023 GERMAN SUPER CUP

Aug 12 – Munich
Bayern Munich 0
RB Leipzig 3 (Olmo 3, 44, 68 pen)

2023 DUTCH SUPER CUP

Aug 4 – Rotterdam
Feyenoord 0
PSV 1 (Lang 79)

2023 PORTUGUESE SUPER CUP

Aug 9 – Aveiro
Benfica 2 (Di Maria 61, Musa 68)
Porto 0

2023-24 UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Second Qualifying Round

Jul 25-26: Zalgiris (Ltu) 2-2 Galatasaray (Tur); HJK (Fin) 1-0 Molde (Nor); Breidablik (Isl) 0-2 Copenhagen (Den); Zrinjski Mostar (Bih) 0-1 Slovan Bratislava (Svk); Dinamo Zagreb (Cro) 4-0 Astana (Kaz); Ludogorets (Bul) 1-1 Olimpija Ljubljana (Svn); Rakow Czestochowa (Pol) 3-2 Qarabag (Aze); KI (Fro) 0-0 BK Hacken (Swe); Sheriff Tiraspol (Mda) 1-0 Maccabi Haifa (Isr); Aris Limassol (Cyp) 6-2 BATE Borisov (Blr); Dnipro-1 (Ukr) 1-3 Panathinaikos (Gre); Servette (Sui) 1-1 Genk (Bel)

Aug 1-2: Galatasaray (Tur) 1-0 Zalgiris (Ltu) (agg 3-2); Molde (Nor) 2-0 HJK (Fin) (agg 2-1); Copenhagen (Den) 6-3 Breidablik (Isl) (agg 8-3); Slovan Bratislava (Svk) 2-2 Zrinjski Mostar (Bih) (agg 3-2); Astana (Kaz) 0-2 Dinamo Zagreb (Cro) (agg 0-6); Olimpija Ljubljana (Svn) 2-1 Ludogorets (Bul) (agg 3-2); Qarabag (Aze) 1-1 Rakow Czestochowa (Pol) (agg 3-4); BK Hacken (Swe) 3-3 KI (Fro) (*AET*, agg 3-3p); Maccabi Haifa (Isr) 4-1 Sheriff Tiraspol (Mda) (*AET*, agg 4-2); BATE Borisov (Blr) 3-5 Aris Limassol (Cyp) (agg 5-11); Panathinaikos (Gre) 2-2 Dnipro-1 (Ukr) (agg 5-3); Genk (Bel) 2-2 Servette (Sui) (*AET*, agg 3-3p)

Third Qualifying Round

Aug 8-9: Rakow Czestochowa (Pol) 2-1 Aris Limassol (Cyp); Olimpija Ljubljana (Svn) 0-3 Galatasaray (Tur); Copenhagen (Den) 0-0 Sparta Prague (Cze); KI (Fro) 2-1 Molde (Nor); Braga (Por) 3-0 TSC (Srb); PSV (Ned) 4-1 Sturm Graz (Aut); Rangers (Sco) 2-1 Servette (Sui); Slovan Bratislava (Svk) 1-2 Maccabi Haifa (Isr); Panathinaikos (Gre) 1-0 Marseille (Fra)
Aug 15: Dinamo Zagreb (Cro) 1-2 AEK Athens (Gre)

Aug 15: Aris Limassol (Cyp) 0-1 Rakow Czestochowa (Pol) (agg 1-3); Maccabi Haifa (Isr) 3-1 Slovan Bratislava (Svk) (agg 5-2); Galatasaray (Tur) 1-0 Olimpija Ljubljana (Svn) (agg 4-0); Sparta Prague (Cze) 3-3 Copenhagen (Den) (agg 3-3p); Molde (Nor) 2-0 KI (Fro) (*AET*, agg 3-2); TSC (Srb) 1-4 Braga (Por) (agg 1-7); Servette (Sui) 1-1 Rangers (Sco) (agg 2-3); Marseille (Fra) 2-1 Panathinaikos (Gre) (*AET*, agg 2-2p); Sturm Graz (Aut) 1-3 PSV (Ned) (agg 2-7)
Aug 19: AEK Athens (Gre) 2-2 Dinamo Zagreb (Cro) (agg 4-3)

2023-24 UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE

Third Qualifying Round

Aug 8-10: Astana (Kaz) 2-1 Ludogorets (Bul); Zalgiris (Ltu) 1-3 BK Hacken (Swe); Qarabag (Aze) 2-1 HJK (Fin); Zrinjski Mostar (Bih) 6-2 Breidablik (Isl); Sheriff Tiraspol (Mda) 5-1 BATE Borisov (Blr); Olympiakos (Gre) 1-0 Genk (Bel); Slavia Prague (Cze) 3-0 Dnipro-1 (Ukr)

Aug 17: BK Hacken (Swe) 5-0 Zalgiris (Ltu) (agg 8-1); Ludogorets (Bul) 5-1 Astana (Kaz) (agg 6-3); HJK (Fin) 1-2 Qarabag (Aze) (agg 2-4); Breidablik (Isl) 1-0 Zrinjski Mostar (Bih) (agg 3-6); BATE Borisov (Blr) 2-2 Sheriff Tiraspol (Mda) (agg 3-7); Genk (Bel) 1-1 Olympiakos (Gre) (agg 1-2); Dnipro-1 (Ukr) 1-1 Slavia Prague (Cze) (agg 1-4)

2023-24 UEFA CONFERENCE LEAGUE

Second Qualifying Round

Jul 25-27: Tre Penne (Smr) 0-3 Valmiera (Lva); Ferencvaros (Hun) 4-0 Shamrock Rovers (Irl); The New Saints (Wal) 1-1 Swift Hesperange (Lux); Atletic Club de Escalades (And) 0-1 Partizani (Alb); Hamrun Spartans (Mlt) 2-1 Dinamo Tbilisi (Geo); Farul Constanta (Rou) 3-2 Urartu (Arm); Struga (Mkd) 1-0 Buducnost Podgorica (Mne); Ballkani (Kos) 3-0 Larne (Nir); Dukagjini (Kos) 0-1 Rijeka (Cro); Gzira United (Mlt) 2-0 F91 Dudelange (Lux); Djurgardens (Swe) 1-2 Luzern (Sui); Celje (Svn) 3-4 Vitoria Guimaraes (Por); Sutjeska Niksic (Mne) 2-0 Santa Coloma (And); Hapoel Be'er Sheva (Isr) 1-0 Panevezys (Ltu); Vorskla Poltava (Ukr) 2-1 Dila Gori (Geo); CFR Cluj (Rou) 1-1 Adana Demirspor (Tur); Ordabasy (Kaz) 2-2 Legia Warsaw (Pol); RFS (Lva) 0-2 Sabah (Aze); Besiktas (Tur) 3-1 Tirana (Alb); Zeljeznicar (Bih) 2-2 Neftchi Baku (Aze); APOEL (Cyp) 2-1 Vojvodina (Srb); CSKA 1948 (Bul) 0-1 FCSB (Rou); Alashkert (Arm) 0-1 Debrecen (Hun); Lech Poznan (Pol) 3-1 Kauno Zalgiris (Ltu); Kalmar FF (Swe) 1-2 Pyunik (Arm); Bodo/Glimt (Nor) 3-0 Bohemians 1905 (Cze); Auda (Lva) 1-1 Spartak Trnava (Svk); Osijek (Cro) 1-0 Zalaegerszeg (Hun); Twente (Ned) 1-0 Hammarby (Swe); KA (Isl) 3-1 Dundalk (Irl); Club Brugge (Bel) 3-0 Aarhus (Den); Crusaders (Nir) 2-2 Rosenborg (Nor); Inter Club d'Escalades (And) 2-1 Hibernian (Sco); Viktoria Plzen (Cze) 0-0 Drita (Kos); B36 Torshavn (Fro) 2-1 Haverfordwest County (Wal); Basel (Sui) 1-3 Tobol (Kaz); Differdange 03 (Lux) 1-1 Maribor (Svn); Austria Vienna (Aut) 1-0 Borac Banja Luka (Bih); CSKA Sofia (Bul) 0-2 Sepsi OSK (Rou); Ararat-Armenia (Arm) 1-1 Aris (Gre); Maccabi Tel Aviv (Isr) 3-0 Petrocub Hincesti (Rou); Torpedo-BelAZ Zhodino (Blr) 2-3 AEK Larnaca (Cyp); Torpedo Kutaisi (Geo) 1-4 Aktobe (Kaz); Midtjylland (Den) 2-0 Progres Niederkorn (Lux); Derry City (Irl) 2-1 KuPS (Fin); Gent (Bel) 5-1 Zilina (Svk); Kecskemeti (Hun) 2-1 Riga (Lva); Linfield (Nir) 2-5 Pogon Szczecin (Pol); PAOK (Gre) 0-0 Beitar Jerusalem (Isr); Neman Grodno (Blr) 2-0 Balzan (Mlt); Fenerbahce (Tur) 5-0 Zimbru Chisinau (Mda); Gabala (Aze) 2-3 Omonia (Cyp); Shkupi (Mkd) 0-2 Levski Sofia (Bul)

Aug 1-3: Valmiera (Lva) 7-0 Tre Penne (Smr) (agg 10-0); Shamrock Rovers (Irl) 0-2 Ferencvaros (Hun) (agg 0-6); Swift Hesperange (Lux) 3-2 The New Saints (Wal) (agg 4-3); Partizani (Alb) 4-1 Atletic Club de Escalades (And) (agg 5-1); Dinamo Tbilisi (Geo) 0-1 Hamrun Spartans (Mlt) (agg 1-3); Urartu (Arm) 2-3 Farul Constanta (Rou) (agg 4-6); Buducnost Podgorica (Mne) 3-4 Struga (Mkd) (agg 3-5); Larne (Nir) 1-4 Ballkani (Kos) (agg 1-7); Rijeka (Cro) 6-1 Dukagjini (Kos) (agg 7-1); F91 Dudelange (Lux) 2-1 Gzira United (Mlt) (agg 2-3); Luzern (Sui) 1-1 Djurgardens (Swe) (agg 3-2); Vitoria Guimaraes (Por) 0-1 Celje (Svn) (*AET*, agg 4-4p); Santa Coloma (And) 3-0 Sutjeska Niksic (Mne) (*AET*, agg 3-2); Panevezys (Ltu) 1-1 Hapoel Be'er Sheva (Isr) (agg 1-2); Dila Gori (Geo) 3-1 Vorskla Poltava (Ukr) (agg 4-3); Adana Demirspor (Tur) 2-1 CFR Cluj (Rou) (agg 3-2); Legia Warsaw (Pol) 3-2 Ordabasy (Kaz) (agg 5-4); Sabah (Aze) 2-1 RFS (Lva) (agg 4-1); Tirana (Alb) 0-2 Besiktas (Tur) (agg 1-5); Neftchi Baku (Aze) 2-0 Zeljeznicar (Bih) (agg 4-2); Vojvodina (Srb) 1-2 APOEL (Cyp) (agg 2-4); FCSB (Rou) 3-2 CSKA 1948 (Bul) (agg 4-2); Debrecen (Hun) 1-2 Alashkert (Arm) (*AET*, agg p2-2); Kauno Zalgiris (Ltu) 1-2 Lech Poznan (Pol) (agg 2-5); Pyunik (Arm) 2-1 Kalmar FF (Swe) (agg 4-2); Bohemians 1905 (Cze) 2-4 Bodo/Glimt (Nor) (agg 2-7); Spartak Trnava (Svk) 4-1 Auda (Lva) (agg 5-2); Zalaegerszeg (Hun) 1-2 Osijek (Cro) (agg 1-3); Hammarby (Swe) 1-1 Twente (Ned) (*AET*, agg 1-2); Dundalk (Irl) 2-2 KA (Isl) (agg 3-5); Aarhus (Den) 1-0 Club Brugge (Bel) (agg 1-3); Rosenborg (Nor) 3-2 Crusaders (Nir) (*AET*, agg 5-4); Hibernian (Sco) 6-1 Inter Club d'Escalades (And) (agg 7-3); Drita (Kos) 1-2 Viktoria Plzen (Cze) (agg 1-2); Haverfordwest County (Wal) 1-1 B36 Torshavn (Fro) (*AET*, agg 1-2); Tobol (Kaz) 1-2 Basel (Sui) (agg 4-3); Maribor (Svn) 4-3 Differdange 03 (Lux) (*AET*, agg 5-4); Borac Banja Luka (Bih) 1-2 Austria Vienna (Aut) (agg 1-3); Sepsi OSK (Rou) 4-0 CSKA Sofia (Bul) (agg 6-0); Aris (Gre) 1-0 Ararat-Armenia (Arm) (agg 2-1); Petrocub Hincesti (Rou) 0-2 Maccabi Tel Aviv (Isr) (agg 0-5); AEK Larnaca (Cyp) 1-1 Torpedo-BelAZ Zhodino (Blr) (agg 4-3); Aktobe (Kaz) 1-2 Torpedo Kutaisi (Geo) (agg 5-3); Progres Niederkorn (Lux) 2-1 Midtjylland (Den) (*AET*, agg 2-3); KuPS (Fin) 3-3 Derry City (Irl) (agg 4-5); Zilina (Svk) 2-5 Gent (Bel) (agg 3-10); Riga (Lva) 3-1 Kecskemeti (Hun) (*AET*, agg 4-3); Pogon Szczecin (Pol) 3-2 Linfield (Nir) (agg 8-4); Beitar Jerusalem (Isr) 1-4 PAOK (Gre) (agg 1-4); Balzan (Mlt) 0-0 Neman Grodno (Blr) (agg 0-2); Zimbru Chisinau (Mda) 0-4 Fenerbahce (Tur) (agg 0-9); Omonia (Cyp) 4-1 Gabala (Aze) (agg 7-3); Levski Sofia (Bul) 1-0 Shkupi (Mkd) (agg 3-0)

Third Qualifying Round

Aug 9-10: AEK Larnaca (Cyp) 1-1 Maccabi Tel Aviv (Isr); Gent (Bel) 5-0 Pogon Szczecin (Pol); Hamrun Spartans (Mlt) 1-6 Ferencvaros (Hun); Farul Constanta (Rou) 3-0 Flora (Est); Valmiera (Lva) 1-2 Partizani (Alb); Ballkani (Kos) 2-0 Lincoln Red Imps (Gib); Struga (Mkd) 3-1 Swift Hesperange (Lux); Sabah (Aze) 2-0 Partizan Belgrade (Srb); Sepsi OSK (Rou) 1-1 Aktobe (Kaz); Rapid Vienna (Aut) 0-0 Debrecen (Hun); Hajduk Split (Cro) 0-0 PAOK (Gre); Santa Coloma (And) 0-1 AZ (Ned); Celje (Svn) 1-0 Neman Grodno (Blr); Neftchi Baku (Aze) 1-3 Besiktas (Tur); Omonia (Cyp) 1-0 Midtjylland (Den); Aris (Gre) 1-0 Dynamo Kyiv (Ukr); Legia Warsaw (Pol) 1-2 Austria Vienna (Aut); Hapoel Be'er Sheva (Isr) 0-0 Levski Sofia (Bul); Hibernian (Sco) 3-1 Luzern (Sui); Viktoria Plzen (Cze) 4-0 Gzira United (Mlt); Arouca (Por) 2-1 Brann (Nor); Adana Demirspor (Tur) 5-1 Osijek (Cro); B36 Torshavn (Fro) 1-3 Rijeka (Cro); Twente (Ned) 2-0 Riga (Lva); Rosenborg (Nor) 2-1 Hearts (Sco); Fenerbahce (Tur) 3-1 Maribor (Svn); Club Brugge (Bel) 5-1 KA (Isl); Dila Gori (Geo) 0-2 APOEL (Cyp); Lech Poznan (Pol) 2-1 Spartak Trnava (Svk); FCSB (Rou) 0-0 Nordsjaelland (Nor); Tobol (Kaz) 1-0 Derry City (Irl); Bodo/Glimt (Nor) 3-0 Pyunik (Arm)

Aug 16-17: Flora (Est) 0-2 Farul Constanta (Rou) (agg 0-5); Maccabi Tel Aviv (Isr) 1-0 AEK Larnaca (Cyp) (agg 2-1); Ferencvaros (Hun) 2-1 Hamrun Spartans (Mlt) (agg 8-2); Partizani (Alb) 1-0 Valmiera (Lva) (agg 3-1); Lincoln Red Imps (Gib) 1-3 Ballkani (Kos) (agg 1-5); Swift Hesperange (Lux) 2-1 Struga (Mkd) (agg 3-4); Partizan (Srb) 2-0 Sabah (Aze) (*AET*, agg 2-2); Aktobe (Kaz) 0-1 Sepsi OSK (Rou) (agg 1-2); Debrecen (Hun) 0-5 Rapid Vienna (Aut) (agg 0-5); PAOK (Gre) 3-0 Hajduk Split (Cro) (agg 3-0); AZ (Ned) 2-0 Santa Coloma (And) (agg 3-0); Neman Grodno (Blr) 1-4 Celje (Svn) (agg 1-5); Besiktas (Tur) 2-1 Neftchi Baku (Aze) (agg 5-2); Midtjylland (Den) 5-1 Omonia (Cyp) (agg 5-2); Dynamo Kyiv (Ukr) 2-1 Aris (Gre) (*AET*, agg p2-2); Austria Vienna (Aut) 3-5 Legia Warsaw (Pol) (agg 5-6); Levski Sofia (Bul) 2-1 Hapoel Be'er Sheva (Isr) (agg 2-1); Luzern (Sui) 2-2 Hibernian (Sco) (agg 3-5); Gzira United (Mlt) 0-2 Viktoria Plzen (Cze) (agg 0-6); Brann (Nor) 3-1 Arouca (Por) (agg 4-3); Pogon Szczecin (Pol) 2-1 Gent (Bel) (agg 2-6); Osijek (Cro) 3-2 Adana Demirspor (Tur) (agg 4-7); Rijeka (Cro) 2-0 B36 Torshavn (Fro) (agg 5-1); Riga (Lva) 0-3 Twente (Ned) (agg 0-5); Hearts (Sco) 3-1 Rosenborg (Nor) (agg 4-3); Maribor (Svn) 0-3 Fenerbahce (Tur) (agg 1-6); KA (Isl) 1-5 Club Brugge (Bel) (agg 2-10); APOEL (Cyp) 1-0 Dila Gori (Geo) (agg 3-0); Spartak Trnava (Svk) 3-1 Lech Poznan (Pol) (agg 4-3); Nordsjaelland (Nor) 2-0 FCSB (Rou) (agg 2-0); Derry City (Irl) 1-0 Tobol (Kaz) (*AET*, agg 1-1p); Pyunik (Arm) 0-3 Bodo/Glimt (Nor) (agg 0-6)

SOUTH AMERICA

2023 COPA LIBERTADORES

Last 16 – 1st Leg

Aug 1 – Buenos Aires
Argentinos Juniors (Arg) 1 (Avalos 14)
Fluminense (Bra) 1 (Samuel Xavier 87)

Aug 1 – La Paz
Bolivar (Bol) 3 (Fernandez 13, 76, Bejarano 27)
Athletico Paranaense (Bra) 1 (Erick 9)

Aug 1 – Buenos Aires
River Plate 2 (Solari 65, 79)
Internacional (Bra) 1 (Valencia 45+1)

Aug 2 – Belo Horizonte
Atletico Mineiro (Bra) 0
Palmeiras (Bra) 1 (Veiga 29)

Aug 2 – Pereira
Deportivo Pereira (Col) 1 (Santacruz 58)
Independiente del Valle (Ecu) 0

Aug 2 – Montevideo
Nacional (Uru) 0
Boca Juniors (Arg) 0

Aug 3 – Medellin
Atletico Nacional (Col) 4 (Zapata 34, Je. Duque 61, Cantera 83, 90+5)
Racing (Arg) 2 (Piovi 87 pen, 90+4 pen)

Aug 3 – Medellin
Flamengo (Bra) 1 (Bruno Henrique 49)
Olimpia (Par) 0

Last 16 – 2nd Leg

Aug 8 – Rio deJaneiro
Fluminense (Bra) 2 (Samuel Xavier 86, John Kennedy 90+7)
Argentinos Juniors (Arg) 0
Fluminense win 3-1 on aggregate

Aug 8 – La Paz
Athletico Paranaense (Bra) 2 (Fernandinho 31 pen, Vitor Roque 67)
Bolivar (Bol) 0
3-3 on aggregate. Bolivar win 5-4 on penalties

Aug 1 – Porto Alegre
Internacional (Bra) 2 (Mercado 70, Alan Patrick 78)
River Plate 1 (Rojas 90)
3-3 on aggregate. Internacional win 9-8 on pens

Aug 9 – Sao Paulo
Palmeiras (Bra) 0
Atletico Mineiro (Bra) 0
Palmeiras win 1-0 on aggregate

Aug 9 – Quito
Independiente del Valle (Ecu) 1 (Hoyos 6)
Deportivo Pereira (Col) 1 (Angulo 50)
Deportivo Pereira win 2-1 on aggregate

Aug 9 – Buenos Aires
Boca Juniors (Arg) 2 (Merentiel 12, Advincula 47)
Nacional (Uru) 2 (Trezza 16, Ramirez 75)
2-2 on aggregate. Boca Juniors win 4-2 on pens

Aug 10 – Avellaneda
Racing (Arg) 3 (Martinez 28, Ojeda 50, Aguirre 56 og)
Atletico Nacional (Col) 0
Racing win 5-4 on aggregate

Aug 10 – Asuncion
Olimpia (Par) 3 (I. Torres 12, Ortiz 69, Bruera 80)
Flamengo (Bra) 1 (Bruno Henrique 8)
Olimpia win 3-2 on aggregate

2023 COPA SUDAMERICANA

Last 16 – 1st Leg

Aug 1 – Guayaquil
Emelec (Ecu) 1 (Carabali 5)
Defensa y Justicia (Arg) 2 (Fernandez 87, Togni 90+1)

Aug 1 – Asuncion
Libertad (Par) 0
Fortaleza (Bra) 1 (Ze Welison 20)

Aug 1 – Sao Paulo
Corinthians (Bra) 2 (Yuri Alberto 57 pen, Wesley 65)
Newell's Old Boys (Arg) 1 (Portillo 45+4)

Aug 2 – La Plata
Estudiantes (Arg) 3 (Carrillo 54, Rollheiser 63, 84)
Goias (Bra) 0

Aug 2 – Rio deJaneiro
Botafogo (Bra) 2 (Hugo 65, Tiquinho 90 pen)
Guarani (Par) 1 (R. Benitez 3)

Aug 3 – Belo Horizonte
America Mineiro (Bra) 1 (Mastriani 73)
Red Bull Bragantino (Bra) 1 (Eder 41 og)

Aug 3 – Buenos Aires
San Lorenzo (Arg) 1 (Bareiro 51)
Sao Paulo (Bra) 0

Aug 3 – Concepcion
Nublense (Chi) 0
LDU (Ecu) 1 (Guerrero 60)

Last 16 – 2nd Leg

Aug 8 – La Plata
Defensa y Justicia (Arg) 1 (Barbona 62)
Emelec (Ecu) 0
Defensa yJusticia win 3-1 on aggregate

Aug 8 – Fortaleza
Fortaleza (Bra) 1 (Marinho 90+1)
Libertad (Par) 1 (Espinoza 44)
Fortaleza win 2-1 on aggregate

Aug 8 – Rosario
Newell's Old Boys (Arg) 0
Corinthians (Bra) 0
Corinthians win 2-1 on aggregate

Aug 9 – Goiania
Goias (Bra) 0
Estudiantes (Arg) 2 (Benedetti 5, Rollheiser 50)
Estudiantes win 5-0 on aggregate

Aug 9 – Asuncion
Guarani (Par) 0
Botafogo (Bra) 0
Botafogo win 2-1 on aggregate

Aug 10 – Quito
LDU (Ecu) 2 (Julio 26, Gonzalez 90+1)
Nublense (Chi) 3 (Rubio 35 pen, Mina 60 og, Rivera 90+3)
3-3 on aggregate. LDU win 4-3 on penalties

Aug 10– Sao Paulo
Sao Paulo (Bra) 2 (Calleri 45, Luciano 67)
San Lorenzo (Arg) 0
Sao Paulo win 2-1 on aggregate

Aug 10 – Sao Paulo
Red Bull Bragantino (Bra) 3 (Sorriso 5, 45+3, Ortiz 57)
America Mineiro (Bra) 3 (Mastriani 45+1, 90+10 pen, Eder 45+5)
4-4 on aggregate. America win 4-3 on pens

ARGENTINA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
River Plate (C)	27	19	4	4	50	20	61
Talleres	27	14	8	5	42	23	50
San Lorenzo	27	12	10	5	23	13	46
Lanus	27	12	9	6	38	27	45
Estudiantes	27	12	9	6	35	24	45
Defensa y Justicia	27	12	8	7	36	23	44
Boca Juniors	27	13	5	9	33	24	44
Rosario Central	27	10	12	5	36	29	42
Godoy Cruz	27	11	8	8	37	32	41
Argentinos Juniors	27	11	7	9	31	22	40
Atletico Tucuman	27	9	10	8	25	27	37
Racing	27	9	9	9	36	35	36
Belgrano	27	10	6	11	20	26	36
Newell's Old Boys	27	8	11	8	24	24	35
Barracas Central	27	8	11	8	25	30	35
Tigre	27	9	7	11	27	29	34
Platense	27	9	7	11	26	29	34
Instituto	27	8	8	11	24	35	32
Sarmiento	27	7	9	11	23	26	30
Union	27	6	12	9	19	25	30
Banfield	27	7	9	11	21	32	30
Gimnasia y Esgrima	27	7	9	11	24	38	30
Central Cordoba	27	7	8	12	20	30	29
Independiente	27	6	10	11	23	32	28
Velez Sarsfield	27	5	12	10	24	27	27
Huracan	27	6	7	14	18	29	25
Colon	27	4	13	10	20	33	25
Arsenal	27	6	4	17	18	34	22

URUGUAY

Torneo Intermedio Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Defensor Sporting*	7	4	2	1	11	5	14
Wanderers	7	3	3	1	10	6	12
Danubio	7	3	2	2	6	4	11
Penarol	7	3	1	3	9	9	10
Boston River	7	3	0	4	8	7	9
River Plate	7	2	3	2	5	7	9
City Torque	7	2	2	3	8	8	8
La Luz	7	1	1	5	6	17	4

**Qualify for Torneo Intermedio final*

Torneo Intermedio Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool*	7	5	1	1	15	8	16
Cerro	7	3	3	1	6	4	12
Nacional	7	3	2	2	12	8	11
Racing	7	3	1	3	12	12	10
Fenix	7	2	3	2	7	5	9
Cerro Largo	7	2	2	3	8	9	8
Deportivo Maldonado	7	1	2	4	7	13	5
Plaza Colonia	7	0	4	3	9	17	4

**Qualify for Torneo Intermedio final*

Torneo Intermedio final

Jul 30: Defensor Sporting 0-1 Liverpool

ASIA

2023-24 AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

West Region

First Preliminary Round

Aug 15: Shabab Al Ahli (UAE) 3-0 Al Wehdat (Jor); Sharjah (UAE) 2-0 Bashundhara Kings (Ban); AGMK (Uzb) 1-0 Al Seeb (Oma)

Play-Off Round

Aug 22: Al Nassr (KSA) 4-2 Shabab Al Ahli (UAE); Tractor (Irn) 1-3 Sharjah (UAE); Al Arabi (Qat) 0-1 AGMK (Uzb); Al Wakrah (Qat) 0-1 Navbahor (Uzb) *AET*

Byes to the Group Stage

Al Hilal (KSA), Al Ittihad (KSA), Al Fayha (KSA), Persepolis (Irn), Nassaji (Irn), Sepahan (Irn), Al Sadd (Qat), Al Duhail (Qat), Pakhtakor (Uzb), Nasaf Qarshi (Uzb), Al Ain (UAE), Al Faisaly (Jor), Istiklol (Tjk), Al Quwa Al Jawiya (Irq), Ahal (Tkm), Mumbai City (Ind)

East Region

First Preliminary Round

Aug 15-16: BC Rangers (Hkg) 1-4 Haiphong (Vie) *AET*; Lee Man (Hkg) 5-1 Bali United (Idn)

Play-Off Round

Aug 22: Incheon United (Kor) 3-1 Haiphong (Vie) *AET*; Urawa Red Diamonds (Jpn) 3-0 Lee Man (Hkg); Zhejiang (Chn) 1-0 Port (Tha); Shanghai Port (Chn) 2-3 BG Pathum United (Tha)

Byes to the Group Stage

Ulsan Hyundai (Kor), Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors (Kor), Pohang Steelers (Kor), Yokohama F. Marinos (Jpn), Ventforet Kofu (Jpn), Kawasaki Frontale (Jpn), Wuhan Three Towns (Chn), Shandong Taishan (Chn), Buriram United (Tha), Bangkok United (Tha), Kitchee (Hkg), Hanoi (Vie), Kaya-Iloilo (Phi), Johor Darul Ta'zim (Mas), Melbourne City (Aus), Lion City Sailors (Sgp)

2023-24 AFC CUP

South Zone

First Preliminary Round

Aug 8: Machhindra (Nep) 3-2 Paro (Bhu)

Second Preliminary Round

Aug 16: Mohun Bagan SG (Ind) 3-1 Machhindra (Nep); Dhaka Abahani (Ban) 2-1 Club Eagles (Mdv)

Play-Off Round

Aug 22: Mohun Bagan SG (Ind) 3-1 Dhaka Abahani (Ban)

Byes to the Group Stage

Odisha (Ind), Bashundhara Kings (Ban), Maziya (Mdv)

Central Zone

Second Preliminary Round

Aug 15: Merw Mary (Tkm) 1-0 Alay Osh (Kgz)

Play-Off Round

Aug 22: Khujand (Tjk) 1-2 Merw Mary (Tkm) *AET*

Byes to the Group Stage

Ravshan Kulob (Tjk), Altyn Asyr (Tkm), Abdysh-Ata Kant (Kgz)

ASEAN Zone

Second Preliminary Round

Aug 16: Phnom Penh Crown (Cam) 3-0 Young Elephants (Lao); Yangon United (Mya) 2-1 DPMM (Bru)

Play-Off Round

Aug 23: Tampines Rovers (Sgp) 2-3 Phnom Penh Crown (Cam); PSM Makassar (Idn) 4-0 Yangon United (Mya)

Byes to the Group Stage

Haiphong (Vie), Terengganu (Mas), Sabah (Mas), Stallion Laguna (Phi), DH Cebu (Phi), Macarthur (Aus), Central Coast Mariners (Aus), Hofgang United (Sgp), Bali United (Idn), Shan United (Mya)

West Zone

Play-Off Round

Aug 22: Al Khaldiya (Bhr) 2-3 Al Nahda (Oma); Al Ittihad (Syr) 2-1 Shabab Al Khalil (Ple)

Byes to the Group Stage

Al Wehdat (Jor), Al Zawraa (Irq), Al Kahrabaa (Irq), Al Ahed (Lbn), Nejmeh (Lbn), Al Kuwait (Kuw), Al Arabi (Kuw), Al Riffa (Bhr), Al Fotuwa (Syr), Jabal Al Mukaber (Ple)

East Zone

Play-Off Round

Aug 23:
Monte Carlo (Mac) 1-2 Taichung Futuro (Tpe)

Byes to the Group Stage

Chao Pak Kei (Mac), Taiwan Steel (Tpe), Ulaanbaatar (Mng)

BANGLADESH

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bashundhara Kings (C)	20	18	1	1	51	13	55
Abahani Dhaka	20	12	4	4	45	18	40
Bangladesh Police	20	10	5	5	39	21	35
Mohammedan Dhaka	20	9	5	6	38	21	32
Sheikh Russel	20	8	6	6	33	30	30
Sheikh Jamal	20	5	9	6	25	32	24
Fortis	20	5	8	7	23	25	23
Abahani Chittagong	20	4	9	7	26	35	21
Rahmatgonj MFS	20	4	7	9	15	31	19
Muktijoddha SKC	20	4	3	13	19	42	15
AFC Uttara (R)	20	0	5	15	10	56	5

IRAQ

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Shorta (C)	38	25	7	6	63	24	82
Al Quwa Al Jawiya	38	23	9	6	62	26	78
Al Zawra'a	38	18	14	6	50	32	68
Al Talaba	38	19	9	10	52	39	66
Al Kahrabaa	38	17	11	10	51	38	62
Erbil	38	16	10	12	44	39	58
Al Najaf	38	15	11	12	46	41	56
Karbala	38	15	11	12	39	34	56
Newroz	38	14	9	15	45	43	51
Naft Maysan	38	13	12	13	42	54	51
Al Karkh	38	13	12	13	40	36	51
Duhok	38	11	17	10	34	39	50
Al Hudod	38	10	19	9	40	37	49
Naft Al-Basra	38	9	16	13	34	40	43
Zakho	38	9	15	14	39	42	42
Naft	38	9	13	16	39	50	40
Al Qasi (R)	38	9	13	16	31	40	40
Naft Al Wasat (R)	38	5	21	12	26	34	36
Al Sinaah (R)	38	7	7	24	26	54	28
Al Diwaniya (R)	38	2	6	30	25	86	12

MACAO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CPK (C)	16	15	1	0	73	4	46
Benfica	16	13	1	2	57	14	40
Monte Carlo	16	12	1	3	64	15	37
Cheng Fung	16	10	1	5	45	20	31
Lun Lok	16	5	1	10	22	43	16
Hang Sai	16	4	1	11	24	75	13
Tak Chun Ka I	16	4	1	11	27	58	13
Sporting Macao	16	2	2	12	23	63	8
Toi Seng (R)	16	2	1	13	17	60	7

CONCACAF

2023 LEAGUES CUP

West Group 1

Jul 22 – Portland
Portland Timbers (USA) 2 (Evander 33, Mora 86)
San Jose Earthquakes (USA) 0

Jul 26 – Portland
Tigres UANL (Mex) 2 (Gignac 42, Angulo 80)
Portland Timbers (USA) 1 (Evander 24)

Jul 30 – San Jose
Tigres UANL (Mex) 1 (Gorriaran 19)
San Jose Earthquakes (USA) 0

	P	W	PW	L	PL	GD	Pts
Tigres (Q)	2	2	0	0	0	+2	6
Portland (Q)	2	1	0	1	0	+1	3
San Jose	2	0	0	2	0	-3	0

West Group 2

Jul 22 – Sandy
Real Salt Lake (USA) 3 (Savarino 48, Arango 51, Rubin 88)
Seattle Sounders (USA) 0

Jul 26 – Sandy
Monterrey (Mex) 3 (Glad 8 og, Berterame 13, 74)
Real Salt Lake (USA) 0

Jul 30 – Seattle
Monterrey (Mex) 4 (Berterame 31, 45+2 pen, 63, Cortizo 48)
Seattle Sounders (USA) 2 (Lodeiro 2, Morris 6)

	P	W	PW	L	PL	GD	Pts
Monterrey (Q)	2	2	0	0	0	+5	6
Salt Lake (Q)	2	1	0	1	0	0	3
Seattle	2	0	0	2	0	-5	0

West Group 3

Jul 21 – Vancouver
Vancouver Whitecaps (Can) 2 (Cordova 44, 57)
Leon (Mex) 2 (Moreno 23, Hernandez 77)
Leon win 16-15 on penalties

Jul 26 – Carson
LA Galaxy (USA) 0
Leon (Mex) 1 (Mena 58)

Jul 30 – Carson
LA Galaxy (USA) 1 (Puig 16)
Vancouver Whitecaps (Can) 2 (Calegari 81 og, White 90+1)

	P	W	PW	L	PL	GD	Pts
Leon (Q)	2	1	1	0	0	+1	5
Vancouver (Q)	2	1	0	0	1	+1	4
LA Galaxy	2	0	0	2	0	-2	0

Central Group 1

Jul 23 – Columbus
Columbus Crew (USA) 2 (Zelarayan 11, Hernandez 29 pen)
St Louis City (USA) 1 (Russell-Rowe 85 og)

Jul 27 – St Louis
Club America (Mex) 4 (Martin 5, Quinones 51, Alvarez 54, Zendejas 77)
St Louis City (USA) 0

Jul 31 – Columbus
Club America (Mex) 1 (Alvarez 29)
Columbus Crew (USA) 4 (Hernandez 41, 69 pen, Ramirez 81, Moreira 90+3)

	P	W	PW	L	PL	GD	Pts
Columbus (Q)	2	2	0	0	0	+4	6
America (Q)	2	1	0	1	0	+1	3
St Louis City	2	0	0	2	0	-5	0

Central Group 2

Jul 23 – Saint Paul
Puebla (Mex) 0
Minnesota United (USA) 4 (Hlongwane 24, 51, Reynoso 59, 65)

Jul 27 – Saint Paul
Minnesota United (USA) 2 (Hlongwane 62, 73)
Chicago Fire (USA) 3 (Shaqiri 69 pen, Souquet 79, Kamara 83)

Jul 31 – Bridgeview
Puebla (Mex) 1 (Angulo 74)
Chicago Fire (USA) 1 (Shaqiri 79)
Puebla win 10-9 on penalties

	P	W	PW	L	PL	GD	Pts
Chicago (Q)	2	1	0	0	1	+1	4
Minnesota (Q)	2	1	0	1	0	+3	3
Puebla	2	0	1	1	0	-4	2

Central Group 3

Jul 23 – Cincinnati
FC Cincinnati (USA) 3 (Pulskamp 34 og, Vazquez 56, Acosta 90+8 pen)
Sporting Kansas City (USA) 3 (Hagglund 9 og, Rosero 12, Kinda 69 pen)
FC Cincinnati win 4-2 on penalties

Jul 27 – Cincinnati
Chivas (Mex) 1 (Briseno 61)
FC Cincinnati (USA) 3 (Vazquez 2, 8, 73)

Jul 31 – Kansas City
Chivas (Mex) 0
Sporting Kansas City (USA) 1 (Russell 27)

	P	W	PW	L	PL	GD	Pts
Cincinnati (Q)	2	1	1	0	0	+2	5
Kansas City (Q)	2	1	0	0	1	+1	4
Chivas	2	0	0	2	0	-3	0

Central Group 4

Jul 23 – Nashville
Nashville SC (USA) 2 (Mukhtar 57, Shaffelburg 65)
Colorado Rapids (USA) 1 (Gutman 80)

Jul 27 – Nashville
Nashville SC (USA) 3 (Zimmerman 3, Picault 37, Haakenson 70)
Toluca (Mex) 4 (Ruiz 27, 44, Volpi 45+8 pen, Morales 61)

Jul 31 – Commerce City
Toluca (Mex) 4 (Pedro Raul 45, Lopez 76, Angulo 90+3, Huerta 90+7 pen)
Colorado Rapids (USA) 1 (Rubio 90+1 pen)

	P	W	PW	L	PL	GD	Pts
Toluca (Q)	2	2	0	0	0	+4	6
Nashville (Q)	2	1	0	1	0	0	3
Colorado	2	0	0	2	0	-4	0

South Group 1

Jul 21 – Austin
Austin FC (USA) 1 (Fagundez 65 pen)
Mazatlan (Mex) 3 (Colman 49, Montano 67, Bello 88)

Jul 25 – Austin
Mazatlan (Mex) 1 (Loba 49)
Juarez (Mex) 1 (Intriago 25 og)
Mazatlan win 4-2 on penalties

Jul 29 – Austin
Austin FC (USA) 1 (Finlay 23)
Juarez (Mex) 3 (Saucedo 35, A. Garcia 62, 69)

	P	W	PW	L	PL	GD	Pts
Mazatlan (Q)	2	1	1	0	0	+2	5
Juarez (Q)	2	1	0	0	1	+2	4
Austin	2	0	0	2	0	-4	0

South Group 2

Jul 21 – Orlando
Orlando City (USA) 1 (McGuire 46)
Houston Dynamo (USA) 1 (Bassi 45+5 pen)
Orlando City win 5-4 on penalties

Jul 25 – Houston
Santos Laguna (Mex) 2 (Preciado 45, 62 pen)
Houston Dynamo (USA) 2 (Baird 14, Dorsey 26)
Houston Dynamo win 5-4 on penalties

Jul 29 – Orlando
Santos Laguna (Mex) 2 (R. Lopez 41, Preciado 58)
Orlando City (USA) 3 (McGuire 44, Pereyra 46, Cartagena 90+2)

	P	W	PW	L	PL	GD	Pts
Orlando (Q)	2	1	1	0	0	+1	5
Houston (Q)	2	0	1	1	0	0	3
Santos Laguna	2	0	0	1	1	-1	1

South Group 3

Jul 21 – Fort Lauderdale
Cruz Azul (Mex) 1 (Antuna 65)
Inter Miami (USA) 2 (Taylor 44, Messi 90+4)

Jul 25 – Fort Lauderdale
Inter Miami (USA) 4 (Messi 8, 22, Taylor 44, 53)
Atlanta United (USA) 0

Jul 29 – Atlanta
Cruz Azul (Mex) 1 (Moises 20)
Atlanta United (USA) 1 (Almada 75)
Cruz Azul win 4-2 on penalties

	P	W	PW	L	PL	GD	Pts
Inter Miami (Q)	2	2	0	0	0	+5	6
Cruz Azul (Q)	2	0	1	1	0	-1	2
Atlanta United	2	0	0	1	1	-4	1

South Group 4

Jul 21 – Frisco
FC Dallas (USA) 2 (Kamungo 45, Lletget 75)
Charlotte FC (USA) 2 (Swiderski 61 pen, Bender 90+7)
Charlotte FC win 4-1 on penalties

Jul 25 – Frisco
FC Dallas (USA) 3 (Lletget 24, Ansah 62, Ferreira 73)
Necaxa (Mex) 0

Jul 29 – Charlotte
Necaxa (Mex) 1 (Poggi 89)
Charlotte FC (USA) 4 (Bronico 6, Swiderski 42, Arfield 45+7, Agyemang 87)

	P	W	PW	L	PL	GD	Pts
Charlotte (Q)	2	1	1	0	0	+3	5
Dallas (Q)	2	1	0	0	1	+3	4
Necaxa	2	0	0	2	0	-6	0

East Group 1

Jul 22 – Chester
Philadelphia Union (USA) 3 (Gazdag 21 pen, Carranza 26, 71)
Tijuana (Mex) 1 (Gonzalez 46)

Jul 26 – Chester
Philadelphia Union (USA) 5 (Gazdag 30, 39 pen, 63 pen, Harriel 43, McGlynn 89)
Queretaro (Mex) 1 (Sandoval 84)

Jul 30 – Chester
Tijuana (Mex) 0
Queretaro (Mex) 1 (Gularte 45+1)

	P	W	PW	L	PL	GD	Pts
Philadelphia (Q)	2	2	0	0	0	+6	6
Queretaro (Q)	2	1	0	1	0	-3	3
Tijuana	2	0	0	2	0	-3	0

East Group 2

Jul 22 – Montreal
CF Montreal (Can) 2 (Duke 23, Choiniere 43)
Pumas UNAM (Mex) 2 (Fernandez 88, Montejano 90+1)
CF Montreal win 4-2 on penalties

Jul 26 – Montreal
CF Montreal (Can) 0
D.C. United (USA) 1 (Hurtado 70)

July 29 – Washington D.C.
Pumas UNAM (Mex) 3 (Huerta 6, Nathan 42, Fernandez 52)
D.C. United (USA) 0

	P	W	PW	L	PL	GD	Pts
Pumas (Q)	2	1	0	0	1	+3	4
D.C. United (Q)	2	1	0	1	0	-2	3
CF Montreal	2	0	1	1	0	-1	2

East Group 3

Jul 23 – New York
New York City FC (USA) 0
Atlas (Mex) 1 (Rocha 7)

Jul 26 – Harrison
New York City FC (USA) 5 (Chanot 30, Bakrar 45, Rodriguez 45+2, 75, Jasson 56)
Toronto FC (Can) 0

Jul 30 – Toronto
Atlas (Mex) 1 (Caicedo 2)
Toronto FC (Can) 0

	P	W	PW	L	PL	GD	Pts
Atlas (Q)	2	2	0	0	0	+2	6
New York City (Q)	2	1	0	1	0	+4	3
Toronto	2	0	0	2	0	-6	0

East Group 4

Jul 22 – Harrison
New York Red Bulls (USA) 0
New England Revolution (USA) 0
New York Red Bulls win 4-2 on penalties

Jul 26 – Foxborough
Atletico San Luis (Mex) 0
New England Revolution (USA) 5 (Vrioni 15, 39, 60, Bou 29, Dominguez 32 og)

World Service

Jul 30 – Harrison
New York Red Bulls (USA) 2 (Vanzeir 56, 90+2)
Atletico San Luis (Mex) 1 (Murillo 69)

	P	W	PW	L	PL	GD	Pts
New York RB (Q)	2	1	1	0	0	+1	5
New England (Q)	2	1	0	0	1	+4	4
Atletico San Luis	2	0	0	2	0	-5	0

Last 32

Aug 2 – Fort Lauderdale
Inter Miami (USA) 3 (Messi 7, 72, Martinez 51 pen)
Orlando City (USA) 1 (Araujo 17)

Aug 2 – Frisco
Mazatlan (Mex) 1 (Montano 57)
FC Dallas (USA) 2 (Velasco 48 pen, Ansah 75)

Aug 2 – Houston
Pachuca (Mex) 0
Houston Dynamo (USA) 0
Houston Dynamo win 5-3 on penalties

Aug 2 – Los Angeles
Los Angeles FC (USA) 7 (Hollingshead 31, Vela 33, 61, Bouanga 52, 66, 78 pen, Ordaz 90)
Juarez (Mex) 1 (Escoto 47)

Aug 3 – Foxborough
Atlas (Mex) 2 (Garcia 8, Caicedo 11)
New England Revolution (USA) 2 (Bou 30, 79)
New England Revolution win 9-8 on penalties

Aug 3 – Chester
Philadelphia Union (USA) 0
D.C. United (USA) 0
Philadelphia Union win 5-4 on penalties

Aug 3 – Washington D.C.
Pumas UNAM (Mex) 0
Queretaro (Mex) 1 (Sepulveda 74)

Aug 3 – Harrison
New York Red Bulls (USA) 1 (Fernandez 31 pen)
New York City FC (USA) 0

Aug 3 – Frisco
Charlotte FC (USA) 0
Cruz Azul (Mex) 0
Charlotte FC win 4-3 on penalties

Aug 4 – Columbus
Columbus Crew (USA) 3 (Amundsen 42, Matan 51, Ramirez 83)
Minnesota United (USA) 3 (Hlongwane 17, 54, Dotson 90)
Minnesota United win 4-3 on penalties

Aug 4 – Columbus
FC Cincinnati (USA) 1 (Vazquez 85 pen)
Nashville SC (USA) 1 (Godoy 64)
Nashville SC win 5-4 on penalties

Aug 4 – Bridgeview
Chicago Fire (USA) 0
Club America (Mex) 1 (Gimenez 64 og)

Aug 4 – Kansas City
Toluca (Mex) 4 (Rosero 29 og, Raul 32, Morales 54, Dominguez 63)
Sporting Kansas City (USA) 1 (Agada 88)

Aug 4 – Sandy
Leon (Mex) 1 (Moreno 8)
Real Salt Lake (USA) 3 (Musovski 69, 71, Arango 81)

Aug 4 – Portland
Monterrey (Mex) 1 (Meza 45+1)
Portland Timbers (USA) 0

Aug 4 – Vancouver
Tigres UANL (Mex) 1 (Gignac 53)
Vancouver Whitecaps (Can) 1 (Vite 9)
Tigres UANL win 5-3 on penalties

Last 16

Aug 6 – Frisco
FC Dallas (USA) 4 (Quignon 37, Kamungo 45, Velasco 63, Taylor 68 og)
Inter Miami (USA) 4 (Messi 6, 85, Cremaschi 65, Farfan 80 og)
Inter Miami win 5-3 on penalties

Aug 7 – Foxborough
Queretaro (Mex) 1 (Gomez 46)
New England Revolution (USA) 1 (Bajraktarevic 78)
Queretaro win 4-3 on penalties

Aug 7 – Houston
Charlotte FC (USA) 2 (Agyemang 80, Micael 81 og)
Houston Dynamo (USA) 1 (Baird 10)

Aug 8 – Chester
Philadelphia Union (USA) 1 (Harriel 68)
New York Red Bulls (USA) 1 (Manoel 4)
Philadelphia Union win 4-3 on penalties

Aug 8 – Nashville
Club America (Mex) 2 (Valdes 78, Quinones 90+4 pen)
Nashville SC (USA) 2 (Zimmerman 61, Surridge 90+9)
Nashville SC win 6-5 on penalties

Aug 8 – Saint Paul
Toluca (Mex) 2 (Huerta 66, Volpi 75)
Minnesota United (USA) 2 (Rosales 13, Hlongwane 32)
Minnesota United win 4-2 on penalties

Aug 8 – Houston
Tigres UANL (Mex) 0
Monterrey (Mex) 1 (Canales 90+7 pen)

Aug 8 – Los Angeles
Los Angeles FC (USA) 4 (Bouanga 52, 56, Ordaz 62, Krastev 84)
Real Salt Lake (USA) 0

Quarter-Finals

Aug 11 – Chester
Philadelphia Union (USA) 2 (Bueno 10, Donovan 90+11)
Queretaro (Mex) 1 (Sepulveda 65)

Aug 11 – Fort Lauderdale
Inter Miami (USA) 4 (Martinez 12 pen, Taylor 32, Malanda 78 og, Messi 86)
Charlotte FC (USA) 0

Aug 11 – Nashville
Nashville SC (USA) 5 (Moore 39, Bunbury 44, Muyl 50, Surridge 53, Mukhtar 59)
Minnesota United (USA) 0

Aug 11 – Pasadena
Los Angeles FC (USA) 2 (Bouanga 2 pen, Bogusz 42)
Monterrey (Mex) 3 (Canales 68 pen, Palencia 80 og, Funes Mori 88)

Semi-Finals

Aug 15 – Chester
Philadelphia Union (USA) 1 (Bedoya 73)
Inter Miami (USA) 4 (Martinez 3, Messi 20, Alba 45+3, Ruiz 84)

Aug 15 – Nashville
Monterrey (Mex) 0
Nashville SC (USA) 2 (Surridge 67, Picault 90+6)

Third Place Play-Off

Aug 19 – Chester
Philadelphia Union (USA) 3 (Bueno 1, Uhre 45+2, Bedoya 69)
Monterrey (Mex) 0

Final

Aug 19 – Nashville
Nashville SC (USA) 1 (Picault 57)
Inter Miami (USA) 1 (Messi 23)
Inter Miami win 10-9 on penalties
Nashville SC: Panicco – Moore, Zimmerman, MacNaughton, Lovitz; Muyl (Leal 82), McCarty (Davis 72), Godoy, Picault (Shaffelburg 72); Surridge, Mukhtar.
Inter Miami: Callender –Yedlin, Kryvtsov, Miller, Alba; Cremaschi (Gomez 68), Busquets, Arroyo (Ulloa 81); Messi, Martinez (Campana 68), Taylor (Ruiz 81).

2023 CARIBBEAN CLUB SHIELD

Group A

Aug 3: Junior Stars (Snm) 1-2 Jong Holland (Cuw); St Paul's United (Skn) 0-2 Metropolitan (Pur)
Aug 5: Junior Stars (Snm) 0-3 Metropolitan (Pur); St Paul's United (Skn) 1-2 Jong Holland (Cuw)
Aug 7: Jong Holland (Cuw) 0-2 Metropolitan (Pur); St Paul's United (Skn) 1-1 Junior Stars (Snm)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Metropolitan (Q)	3	3	0	0	7	0	9
Jong Holland	3	2	0	1	4	4	6
St Paul's United	3	0	1	2	2	5	1
Junior Stars	3	0	1	2	2	6	1

Group B

Aug 3: South East (Dma) 0-2 Scholars International (Cay)
Aug 5: South East (Dma) 1-11 Golden Lion (Mtq)
Aug 7: Scholars International (Cay) 0-4 Golden Lion (Mtq)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Golden Lion (Q)	2	2	0	0	15	1	6
Scholars Intl	2	1	0	1	2	4	3
South East	2	0	0	2	1	13	0

Waterhouse (Jam) withdrew

Group C

Aug 4: B1 (Lca) 0-4 Etoile Matoury (Guf); O&M (Dom) 1-2 Robinhood (Sur)
Aug 6: O&M (Dom) 1-2 Etoile Matoury (Guf); B1 (Lca) 0-5 Robinhood (Sur)
Aug 9: Etoile Matoury (Guf) 2-4 Robinhood (Sur); O&M (Dom) 8-2 B1 (Lca)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Robinhood (Q)	3	3	0	0	11	3	9
Etoile Matoury	3	2	0	1	8	5	6
O&M	3	1	0	2	10	6	3
B1	3	0	0	3	2	17	0

Group D

Aug 4: Dakota (Aru) 2-0 SWA Sharks (Tca); Club Sando (Tri) 4-0 Solidarite-Scolaire (Glp)
Aug 6: Club Sando (Tri) 9-0 SWA Sharks (Tca); Dakota (Aru) 1-0 Solidarite-Scolaire (Glp)
Aug 8: Club Sando (Tri) 3-0 Dakota (Aru); SWA Sharks (Tca) 1-1 Solidarite-Scolaire (Glp)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Club Sando (Q)	3	3	0	0	16	0	9
Dakota	3	2	0	1	3	3	6
Solidarite-Scolaire	3	0	1	2	1	6	1
SWA Sharks	3	0	1	2	1	12	1

Semi-Finals

Aug 11 – Saint Peter
Robinhood (Sur) 5 (Cairo 41, 72, 75, Andro 45, Da Silva 69 pen)
Metropolitan (Pur) 0

Aug 11 – Saint Peter
Club Sando (Tri) 1 (Jones 45)
Golden Lion (Mtq) 2 (Bellance 12, Parsemain 24)

Third Place Play-Off

Aug 13 – Saint Peter
Metropolitan (Pur) 1 (Ferrer 39)
Club Sando (Tri) 6 (Phillip 11, Thomas 32, Kesar 45, Dillon 66, 68, 89)

Final

Aug 13 – Saint Peter
Robinhood (Sur) 5 (Andro 26, Cairo 37, 39, Rigters 72, Adipi 77 pen)
Golden Lion (Mtq) 1 (Lamasine 68)

2023 CENTRAL AMERICAN CUP

Group A

Aug 1: Jocoro (Slv) 1-4 Coban Imperial (Gua)
Aug 3: Saprissa (Crc) 1-0 Cartagines (Crc)
Aug 8: Coban Imperial (Gua) 0-0 Universitario (Pan)
Aug 10: Jocoro (Slv) 0-4 Saprissa (Crc)
Aug 15: Universitario (Pan) 4-1 Jocoro (Slv); Coban Imperial (Gua) 0-1 Cartagines (Crc)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Saprissa	2	2	0	0	5	0	6
Universitario	2	1	1	0	4	1	4
Coban Imperial	3	1	1	1	4	2	4
Cartagines	2	1	0	1	1	1	3
Jocoro	3	0	0	3	2	12	0

Group B

Aug 1: Real Esteli (Nca) 1-0 Xelaju (Gua)
Aug 2: Olimpia (Hon) 1-1 Independiente (Pan)
Aug 8: Real Esteli (Nca) 1-0 Olimpia (Hon)
Aug 9: Xelaju (Gua) 2-1 FAS (Slv)
Aug 15: FAS (Slv) 0-2 Real Esteli (Nca)
Aug 16: Xelaju (Gua) 1-3 Independiente (Pan)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Esteli	3	3	0	0	4	0	9
Independiente	2	1	1	0	4	2	4
Xelaju	3	1	0	2	3	5	3
Olimpia	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
FAS	2	0	0	2	1	4	0

Group C

Aug 2: Comunicaciones (Gua) 3-1 Real Espana (Hon)
Aug 3: Diriangen (Nca) 1-1 Herediano (Crc)
Aug 9: Herediano (Crc) 2-0 Aguila (Slv)
Aug 10: Diriangen (Nca) 0-1 Comunicaciones (Gua)
Aug 16: Herediano (Crc) 3-2 Real Espana (Hon)
Aug 17: Aguila (Slv) 1-0 Diriangen (Nca)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Herediano	3	2	1	0	6	3	7
Comunicaciones	2	2	0	0	4	1	6
Aguila	2	1	0	1	1	2	3
Diriangen	3	0	1	2	1	3	1
Real Espana	2	0	0	2	3	6	0

Group D

Aug 1: Alajuelense (Crc) 1-0 Olancho (Hon)
Aug 2: Verdes (Blz) 0-5 Motagua (Hon)
Aug 8: Verdes (Blz) 0-3 Alajuelense (Crc)
Aug 9: Motagua (Hon) 2-0 Sporting San Miguelito (Pan)
Aug 16: Sporting San Miguelito (Pan) 4-0 Verdes (Blz)
Aug 17: Motagua (Hon) 1-0 Olancho (Hon)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Motagua	3	3	0	0	8	0	9
Alajuelense	2	2	0	0	4	0	6
Sporting SM	2	1	0	1	4	2	3
Olancho	2	0	0	2	0	2	0
Verdes	3	0	0	3	0	12	0

● *All 2023 Central American Cup tables correct up to the conclusion of matchday 3*

SURINAME

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Robinhood (C)	24	20	2	2	94	20	62
Inter Moengotapoe	24	15	2	7	66	32	47
PVV	24	13	4	7	42	25	43
Notch	24	12	7	5	44	33	43
Leo Victor	24	12	5	7	65	43	41
Transvaal	24	12	5	7	53	37	41
Voorwaarts	24	10	6	8	31	29	36
Broki	24	9	3	12	38	52	30
SNL	24	7	5	12	35	51	26
Flora	24	6	6	12	36	57	24
Slee Juniors	24	6	5	13	46	51	23
FC Inter Wanica	24	5	3	16	30	66	18
Santos (R)	24	1	3	20	20	104	6
Bintang Lahir (R)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

AFRICA

2023-24 CAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

First Qualifying Round Draw

Hafia (Gui) v Generation Foot (Sen); Garde Nationale (Nig) v AS Douanes (Bfa); Bo Rangers (Sle) v LISCR (Lbr); Medeama (Gha) v Remo Stars (Nga); KMKM (Zan) v St George (Eth); APR FC (Rwa) v Gaadiidka (Som); CS Bendje (Gab) v Bumauru (Bdi); African Stars (Nam) v Power Dynamos (Zam); UD Songo (Moz) v Green Mambas (Swz); Dragon FC (Eqg) v Big Bullets (Mwi); Al Ahly Benghazi (Lby) v Enyimba (Nga); CotonSport Benin (Ben) v ASEC Abidjan (Civ); CS Constantine (Alg) v Etoile Sahel (Tun); ASKO Kara (Tog) v Royal Armed Forces (Mar); Real Bamako (Mli) v Coton Sport (Cmr); FC Nouadibou (Mtn) v Al Ahly Tripoli (Lby); Primero Agosto (Ang) v AS Vita Club (Cod); Salam (Ssd) v Al Hilal (Sdn); AS Otoho (Cgo) v Al Merreikh (Sdn); ASAS (Dji) v Young Africans (Tan); Jwaneng Galaxy (Bot) v Vipers (Uga); Djabal Club (Com) v Orlando Pirates (RSA)
**Teams drawn first play the first leg at home*

2023-24 CAF CONFEDERATION CUP

First Qualifying Round Draw

Bendel Insurance (Nga) v ASO Chlef (Alg); FUS Rabat (Mar) v AS Loto (Ben); Casa Sport (Sen) v Etoile Filante (Bfa); Arta Solar 7 (Dji) v Horseed (Som); Singida Big Stars (Tan) v JKU (Zan); Bahir Dar (Eth) v Azam (Tan); Olympic Beja (Tun) v Abo Selim (Lby); Kakamenga Homeboyz (Ken) v Al Hilal Benghazi (Lby); Sekhukhune United (RSA) v Young Buffaloes (Swz); Cano Sport (Eqg) v Maestro United (Zam); Ferroviario Maputo (Moz) v Belle Lumiere (Com); Gaborone United (Bot) v Elgeco Plus (Mad); Amicale Douanes (Mtn) v SOAR (Gui); ASCK (Tog) v Amadou Diallo (Civ); Milo (Gui) v Dream FC (Gha); AS Douanes (Nig) v Kallon FC (Sle); Watanga (Lbr) v Stade Malien (Mli); Hay Al Arab (Sdn) v Aigle Noir (Bdi); Haidoub (Sdn) v Al Mereikh Juba (Ssd); Academica Lobito (Ang) v La Passe (Sey)
**Teams drawn first play the first leg at home*

EGYPT

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ahly (C)	34	25	8	1	63	13	83
Pyramids	34	22	7	5	58	24	73
Zamalek	34	17	9	8	52	36	60
Future	34	15	13	6	34	23	58
Al Masry	34	11	15	8	34	33	48
ENPPI	34	13	6	15	34	40	45
Al Mokawloon	34	9	17	8	35	33	44
Al Ittihad	34	12	7	15	36	43	43
Pharco	34	9	15	10	31	34	42
Smouha	34	10	12	12	36	43	42
Ismaily	34	9	13	12	35	38	40
National Bank of Egypt	34	9	12	13	35	40	39
Ceramica Cleopatra	34	7	16	11	31	32	37
El Geish	34	8	12	14	33	45	36
El Dakhleya	34	7	14	13	32	43	35
Aswan (R)	34	8	9	17	31	45	33
Ghazl El Mehalla (R)	34	8	9	17	26	47	33
Haras El Hodood (R)	34	5	10	19	21	45	25

LIBYA

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ahli Tripoli (C)	5	4	1	0	10	2	13
Al Ahli Benghazi	5	3	0	2	6	7	9
Al Hilal	5	1	3	1	3	3	6
Abu Salim	5	1	2	2	5	7	5
Al Nasr	5	1	1	3	4	6	4
Al Ittihad	5	0	3	2	4	7	3

SENEGAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Generation Foot (C)	26	16	5	5	33	15	53
Casa Sport	26	12	7	7	32	23	43
Guediawaye	26	11	9	6	28	19	42
Diambars	26	13	3	10	33	25	42
Jaraaf	26	10	7	9	18	15	37
Teungueth	26	10	6	10	24	23	36
Sonacos	26	8	11	7	20	18	35
Goree	26	7	12	7	19	20	33
DSC	26	7	11	8	16	18	32
Pikine	26	7	10	9	16	20	31
La Linguere	26	7	9	10	24	23	30
Stade de Mbour	26	4	17	5	15	19	29
Douanes (R)	26	6	10	10	12	24	28
CNEPS Excellence (R)	26	1	9	16	19	47	12

SIERRA LEONE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bo Rangers (C)	34	23	11	0	45	12	80
Mighty Blackpool	34	18	7	9	42	31	61
East End Lions	34	17	9	8	35	18	60
Kallon	34	16	9	9	49	34	57
Diamond Stars	34	12	11	11	35	26	47
Freetonians SLIFA	34	11	13	10	33	30	46
Bai Bureh Warriors	34	11	11	12	29	40	44
Ports Authority	34	11	10	13	25	29	43
Wusum Stars	34	12	5	17	45	44	41
Luawa	34	10	11	13	23	25	41
Old Edwardians	34	10	11	13	32	36	41
Freetown City	34	10	11	13	23	30	41
Lamboi	34	11	7	16	27	44	40
Real Republicans	34	10	9	15	26	31	39
Central Parade	34	9	12	13	32	39	39
Kamboi Eagles (R)	34	9	11	14	29	35	38
Johansen (R)	34	9	11	14	22	33	38
East End Tigers (R)	34	8	9	17	27	42	33

ARABIA

2023 KING SALMAN CLUB CUP

Group A

Jul 27 – Taif
CS Sfaxien (Tun) 0
Al Shorta (Irq) 1 (Abdul-Zahra 64 pen)

Jul 27 – Taif
Esperance (Tun) 1 (Bouguerra 26)
Al Ittihad (KSA) 2 (Hamdallah 35, Benzema 55)

Jul 30 – Taif
Al Shorta (Irq) 0
Esperance (Tun) 0

Jul 30 – Taif
Al Ittihad (KSA) 1 (Benzema 63)
CS Sfaxien (Tun) 0

Aug 2 – Al Bahah
Esperance (Tun) 0
CS Sfaxien (Tun) 0

Aug 2 – Taif
Al Shorta (Irq) 1 (Moumouni 80)
Al Ittihad (KSA) 2 (Bamsaud 36, Benzema 84 pen)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ittihad (Q)	3	3	0	0	5	2	9
Al Shorta (Q)	3	1	1	1	2	2	4
Esperance	3	0	2	1	1	2	2
CS Sfaxien	3	0	1	2	0	2	1

Group B

Jul 27 – Abha
Al Sadd (Qat) 0
Wydad AC (Mar) 0

Jul 27 – Abha
Al Ahli Tripoli (Lby) 0
Al Hilal (KSA) 0

Jul 30 – Abha
Wydad AC (Mar) 1 (El Amloud 45+2)
Al Ahli Tripoli (Lby) 1 (Krawa'a 48)

Jul 30 – Abha
Al Hilal (KSA) 2 (Michael 10, S. Al Dawsari 68 pen)
Al Sadd (Qat) 3 (Bounedjah 40, Salman 51, Plata 90+3)

Aug 2 – Khamis Mushayt
Al Sadd (Qat) 1 (Otavio 89)
Al Ahli Tripoli (Lby) 0

Aug 2 – Abha
Al Hilal (KSA) 2 (Milinkovic-Savic 41, Neves 66)
Wydad AC (Mar) 1 (Bouhra 64)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Sadd (Q)	3	2	1	0	4	2	7
Al Hilal (Q)	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Wydad AC	3	0	2	1	2	3	2
Al Ahli Tripoli	3	0	2	1	1	2	2

Group C

Jul 28 – Taif
Zamalek (Egy) 4 (Ben Said 26 og, Zizo 43, Abdallah 56, 64)
US Monastir (Tun) 0

Jul 28 – Taif
Al Nassr (KSA) 0
Al Shabab (KSA) 0

Jul 31 – Taif
Al Shabab (KSA) 1 (Banega 44 pen)
Zamalek (Egy) 0

Jul 31 – Taif
US Monastir (Tun) 1 (Lajami 66 og)
Al Nassr (KSA) 4 (Talisca 42, Ronaldo 74, Al Amri 88, Al Elewai 90)

Aug 3 – Taif
Zamalek (Egy) 1 (Zizo 54 pen)
Al Nassr (KSA) 1 (Ronaldo 87)

Aug 3 – Al Bahah
Al Shabab (KSA) 1 (Banega 26 pen)
US Monastir (Tun) 0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Shabab (Q)	3	2	1	0	2	0	7
Al Nassr (Q)	3	1	2	0	5	2	5
Zamalek	3	1	1	1	5	2	4
US Monastir	3	0	0	0	1	9	0

Group D

Jul 28 – Abha
CR Belouizdad (Alg) 1 (Hadded 10)
Raja (Mar) 2 (Bouzok 58 pen, Arrassi 90+4)

Jul 28 – Abha
Kuwait SC (Kuw) 1 (Al Dhefiri 90+2)
Al Wahda (UAE) 2 (Al Mansoori 72, Pedro 77)

Jul 31 – Abha
Al Wahda (UAE) 2 (Kruspzky 44, Guanca 61)
CR Belouizdad (Alg) 1 (Bouguerra 84)

Jul 31 – Abha
Raja (Mar) 2 (Rahimi 52, Zrida 63)
Kuwait SC (Kuw) 0

Aug 3 – Khamis Mushayt
CR Belouizdad (Alg) 1 (Belkhir 6)
Kuwait SC (Kuw) 1 (Khenissi 87 pen)

Aug 3 – Abha
Al Wahda (UAE) 0
Raja (Mar) 1 (El Wardi 26)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Raja (Q)	3	3	0	0	5	1	9
Al Wahda (Q)	3	2	0	1	4	3	6
CR Belouizdad	3	0	1	2	3	5	1
Kuwait SC	3	0	1	2	2	5	1

Quarter-Finals

Aug 5 – Taif
Al Ittihad (KSA) 1 (Romarinho 56)
Al Hilal (KSA) 3 (Milinkovic-Savic 14, S. Al-Dawsari 45+3 pen, Malcom 70)

Aug 5 – Abha
Al Sadd (Qat) 2 (Afif 24 pen, 81)
Al Shorta (Irq) 4 (Sabah 32, Rostam 59 pen, 78, Farhan 70)

Aug 6 – Taif
Al Shabab (KSA) 0
Al Wahda (UAE) 0
Al Shabab win 5-4 on penalties

Aug 6 – Abha
Raja (Mar) 1 (Madu 41 og)
Al Nassr (KSA) 3 (Ronaldo 19, S. Al Ghannam 29 Fofana 38)

Semi-Finals

Aug 9 – Abha
Al Shorta (Irq) 0
Al Nassr (KSA) 1 (Ronaldo 75 pen)

Aug 9 – Taif
Al Hilal (KSA) 3 (Kanno 9, Malcom 45+3, Al Hamdan 90+5)
Al Shabab (KSA) 1 (Cuellar 56)

Final

Aug 12 – Taif
Al Hilal (KSA) 1 (Michael 51)
Al Nassr (KSA) 2 (Ronaldo 74, 98)
After Extra-Time
Al Hilal: Al Owais – Abdulhamid, Koulibaly (Jahfali 83), Al Bulayhi (Al Burayk 83), Al Shahrani; Kanno (Al Juwayr 105+2), Neves (Radif 105+1); Michael (Al Hamdan 90), Milinkovic-Savic, S. Al Dawsari; Malcom (Carillo 105+1).
Al Nassr: Al Aqidi – Al Ghannam, Lajami (Al Fatil 79), Al Amri, Alex Telles; Fofana, Al Khaibari (Konan 80); Talisca (Ghareeb 90), Brozovic (Al Sulaiheem 120+2), Mane (Al Elewai 120); Ronaldo (Al Hassan 115).
Sent off: Al Amri 71.

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Carla Overbeck

United States 0 (P) China 0

1999 Women's World Cup final, Pasadena Rose Bowl

In 1999, Carla Overbeck captained the United States to their second World Cup triumph after a penalty-shootout victory over China in front of 90,185 supporters – the biggest-ever crowd to attend a Women's World Cup match.

Captain...Overbeck celebrates with her second World Cup winners' medal

"My whole family was from California, we moved to Texas when I was around five, but all our relatives lived in California so we would always go to the Rose Bowl parade. It was a really fun thing we all did as a family, the parade was amazing and the stadium is beautiful, so to go back there in 1999 was pretty special.

When we won the World Cup in 1991, I was the sweeper, that's what we played in college. It wasn't until after the introduction of the back-pass rule in 1992 that we changed our system. I credit United States head coach Tony DiCicco a lot for that, because after we lost in the 1995 World Cup to Norway, we changed our whole system. We played with a flat back three, then it changed into a flat back four. When the game evolves, your team has to evolve as well.

We felt so much pressure in the United States to grow the game. For the 1999 tournament to be a success, we had to continue to win. Originally, they wanted us to play in the smaller stadiums. Fortunately, Marla Messing and Donna de Varona on the organising committee realised that this could potentially be a huge thing so we were going to target the big stadiums. Then it was our job as players to make it known out there that a big event was coming. Prior to the tournament, we would land in a city and we would do these clinics. We would go to schools and try to promote the game.

I remember how so many people came out to watch us play and the millions that were watching on TV. I never, ever thought it would be that big. After the Olympics in Atlanta 1996, we sort of got a taste of what potentially could happen in 1999 and we were really excited about it.

I don't remember a lot about the match. I know it was super-hot! Going into penalty kicks was not a fun way to end the match. Michelle Akers was in the first five for the shootout, but she had been substituted. After the end of extra-time, we didn't really know who was kicking, we didn't know the order; I wasn't supposed to be first, Michelle was.

When I scored, I think I was just relieved. As a player, you want that responsibility. You just realise the magnitude of everything in that game, in that moment and leading up to it. I was relieved, I was excited, I was happy. Defenders don't score goals very often so I was whipping up the crowd in my celebration.

After Brandi [Chastain] scored the fifth one, it was just mayhem! Everyone was excited. We were ripping off all our stuff and giving it to all the fans in the stadium. It was just an amazing, amazing day.

After you win, you go back to your regular job. I played in the league for a few years after that match. I don't think about it that often. If someone brings it up, if they recognise me, I will chat with them and I get excited talking about it. It was something that happened so long ago, but I love that all this excitement was generated for the Women's World Cup this summer."

Interview by Asif Burhan

World champions... Overbeck lifts the trophy as captain

> "I remember how so many people came out to watch us play and the millions that were watching on TV. I never, ever thought it would be that big"

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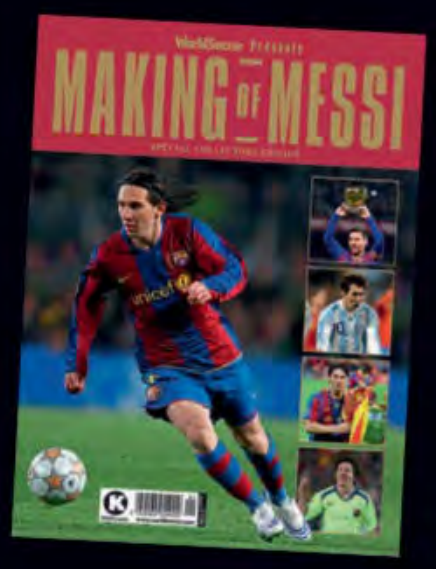

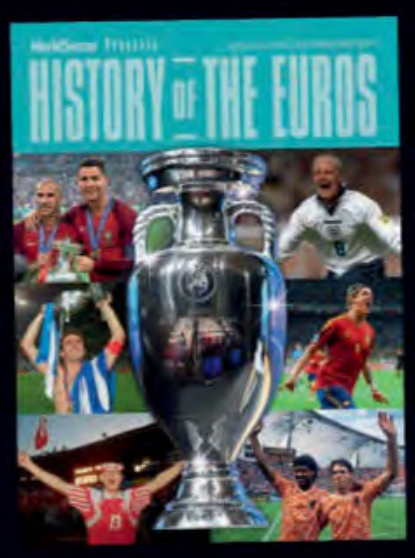

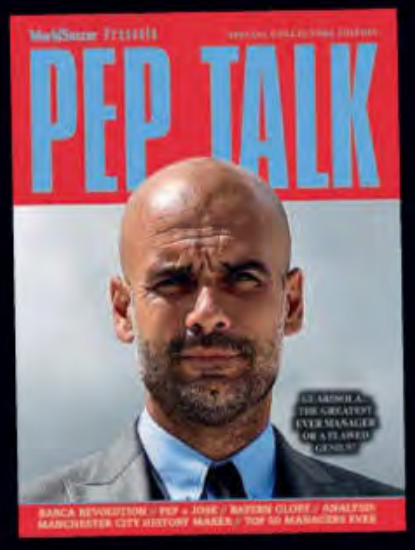

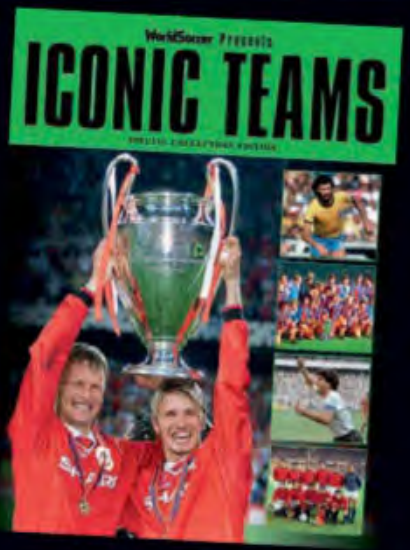

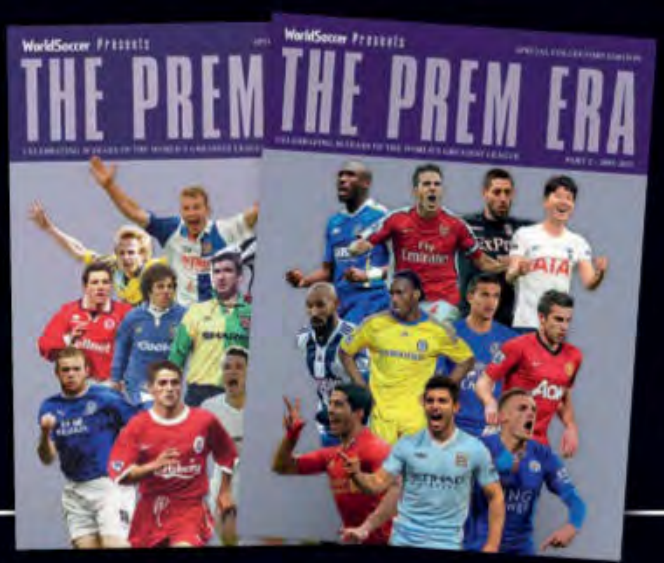

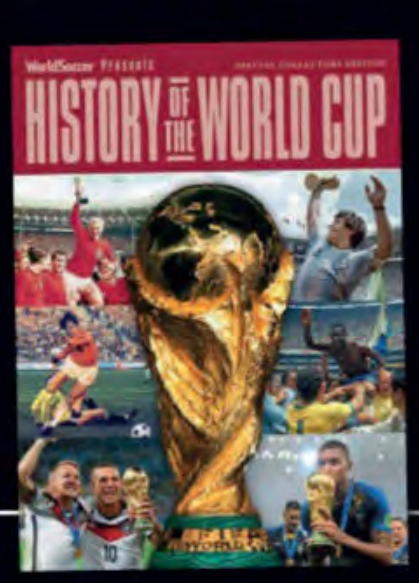

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